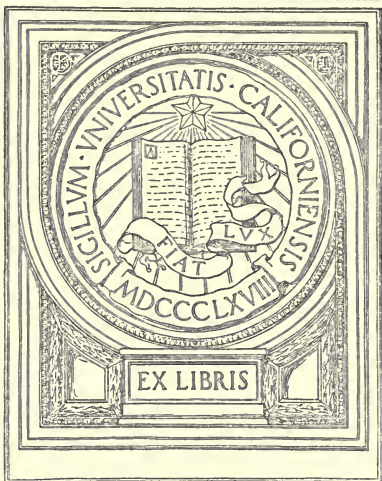


A STRANGE FLAW



HENRY S. WILCOX

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON



A Strange Flame.

A STRANGE FLAW

BY

HENRY S. WILCOX

Author of Foibles of the Bench, Trials of a Stump Speaker, etc.



UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

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AT LOS ANGELES

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DEDICATION.

To the common people of the World, who have ever done the hardest work and had the poorest pay; who have always suffered the keenest sorrow and received the least sympathy; who have encountered the greatest dangers and been given the smallest credit; to those countless millions who through long and weary years have borne the innumerable woes that have emanated from unjust rulers and by their patience and heroic sacrifices in war and peace have sustained and protected their despoilers, meanwhile hoping that after the night of oppression has passed a day of justice might sometime dawn; to those victims of misfortune and injustice this work is sympathetically inscribed.

THE AUTHOR.

MAR 27 '43

GIFT OF MRS. A. F. MORRISON

PREFACE.

The design of the author in writing this book is to uncover the machinery so frequently and effectively employed by skillful schemers for despoiling the masses of his countrymen, and to show the methods by which governmental agencies intended to promote and protect the people have been perverted to their injury. Many wrongs of the character herein depicted have come within his personal knowledge and in his professional career many flaws as destitute of merit as the one here shown have wrought great havoc in the administration of justice. This book is not intended to caricature any person, nor to inflame the passions of one class against another, nor to destroy confidence in our system of government. On the contrary the writer expects by exposing abuses of power to stimulate a sentiment that will remedy defects and prevent a recurrence of such abuses. A government must be sustained by the intelligence of its people. In publicity is public safety. If the tale herein told shall amuse and win the sympathy of the reader, the author hopes it may also afford instruction which will be of a permanent value and in some way contribute to the glory of his country and the benefit of mankind.



CHAPTERS.

	PAGE
I.—The Inaugural Ball	13
II.—The Flaw	33
III.—A Smiling Land	45
IV.—The Jinks Family	53
V.—Railroad Building	64
VI.—A Cloud	80
VII.—Jealousy	100
VIII.—A Railroad Meeting	115
IX.—The Interview	134
X.—The Proposal	151
XI.—The Legislature	168
XII.—The Great Debate	184
XIII.—The Trial	203
XIV.—Supreme Court of the United States	217
XV.—The Sentence of Death	235
XVI.—The End	248



A Strange Flaw.

CHAPTER I

INAUGURATION BALL

"Hilarity kicks high to-night. The president in honor of his inauguration has turned jumping-jack. Well, one-half the world are fools; yes, and the other half are monkeys who imitate them."

These words were uttered by John Duncan, one of the nation's money kings, as he was entering a room adjoining the hall where a ball was being held in honor of the inauguration of the new president of the United States. In this room several tables had been spread and they were well supplied with the luxuries of the land and immaculately dressed attendants were in waiting. Here the new president contemplated enjoying a private supper with a few of his choice friends, and he supposed that such arrangements were made that the festivities could occur without

A Strange Flaw

interruption. Duncan had not come to partake of this supper. He came to urge the appointment of a friend as Secretary of the Treasury. The great banking interests of Wall Street had sent him as their representative because he was well acquainted with the new president and had rendered much assistance in procuring his election. When Duncan entered, one of the servants said to him:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but this room is reserved for the president and his special guests."

"Tell the president," said Duncan, "I wish to see him right away. Go!"

"Your card, please," said the servant.

"Card?" echoed Duncan. "Tell him I am John Duncan and I wish to see him here."

The servant disappeared and Duncan said to himself: "This is his night of triumph, and he certainly will promise anything and I must have the appointment." In a few minutes the servant returned and said:

"The president expresses high regard for Mr. Duncan, sir."

"But I want him. Bring him here," said Duncan irritably.

A Strange Flaw

"Yes, sir," said the servant, and he disappeared again and in a few minutes the president entered accompanied by his wife, one of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, a general of the United States army, with their wives and others, and as soon as he saw John Duncan he rushed up to him, grasped him by the hand very cordially, and exclaimed:

"Why, hello, Brother Duncan! I have searched for you the whole evening. How fine you look! You know my wife, and the judge here, and the general. This, ladies and gentlemen, is John Duncan, the great capitalist."

"It pleases us to make your acquaintance, sir," said the judge.

"Duncan, did you say? Ha-ha-ha. Heard of you, Mr. John Duncan," said the general, who was evidently in a very merry mood.

Duncan was not disposed to become familiar, and he called the president to one side and told him what he wanted, and while they were talking the general exclaimed:

"I am dry, ha-ha, damned dry, ha-ha; I want some liquor, ha-ha."

"What kind?" asked one of the servants.

A Strange Flaw

"Any kind," said the general; "every kind, ha-ha, all kinds, ha-ha; enough to swim in, enough to drown in, ha-ha."

"Duncan, won't you sit down and eat with us?" said the president.

"I am not hungry," said Duncan.

"Then drink with us," said the president.

"I do not drink," said Duncan.

"Then have a cigar."

"I don't smoke."

"Come sit down and visit with the ladies."

"I don't care for the women."

"Brother Duncan, you are difficult to please," said the president. "What can I do for you?"

"I have told you," said Duncan.

"Very well," said the president, "he shall have it."

"Then I am pleased; good night," said Duncan. Bowing slightly, he left the room.

"Brother Duncan is a business man who has no time for pleasure. Such men as he have made this nation great," said the president.

"I should so judge if the question came before my court," replied the judge.

A Strange Flaw

"Let's drink his health, ha-ha-ha!" was the proposition of the general.

"Mr. President, this is a most auspicious night, following a day of glory," said the judge. "Never since the mighty Washington was first sworn in has there been such grandeur."

"The pageant passing down the avenue shone like the bright appareled hosts of Heaven when Satan was overthrown," said the president. "Their gilded vestments blazed in dazzling splendor. Ten thousand bayonets glittered in the sun. A mighty equipage of prancing steeds, richly caparisoned and superbly mounted, bore all the pride and pomp of military power. Princes and potentates from every land sent their representatives to grace this great procession."

"Yes," replied the judge, "and you were the head and front of all this pageant, drawn by the finest horses in the land."

"Since early dawn," continued the president, "vast crowds have lined the avenue, jostling and fighting for a chance to see, and when my carriage passed the multitude sent

A Strange Flaw

up so great a shout it seemed as if the hosts of all the earth had joined in the acclaim."

"And not a single accident occurred to mar the pleasure of the grand parade," suggested the president's wife.

The judge's wife then remarked that it was stated in the paper that a beggar by the name of Peter Sorrow had been run down and killed.

The president's wife said she knew Peter Sorrow when she was a girl, and the news distressed her, for he was an old soldier who had marched with Sherman to the sea and lost both of his arms in battle. The president asked if he had not been pensioned. He was told that the papers stated that the old soldier had tried many years in vain to get a pension, and could not satisfy the rules by proving just when, and where, and how he lost his arms.

"Such claims should not be difficult," declared the president's wife. "The nation in whose behalf he gave his arms should quickly stretch its arms to shelter him."

"He needs no pension now," said the judge. "He is much better off." This, of course, was based upon the idea that his en-

A Strange Flaw

vironment would not have improved had he lived.

"By every such procession someone gets hurt," said the president.

"I think," said the judge, "that the assemblage at the ball to-night exceeds in splendor the scene to-day."

"Yes," said the president, "every clime has sent an embassy arrayed in gorgeous hues and glittering gems, but none outshines the gem-bespangled darlings of our land. As we led on the march and I looked about the spacious hall so gay with flowers and banners everywhere and saw the brilliant, swaying, happy throng, it seemed as if my fairest dreams of heaven were here in full display. The clear, mild light shed by a myriad lamps of varied tints upon the merry host of proud, white-fronted men and jewel-laden women disclosed a fairy land, a most enchanted realm."

"This scene transports me to bliss unknown before," said the president's wife.

"I would be happy did not the cares of my new office so heavily weigh me down," remarked the president.

"That such a night should follow such a

A Strange Flaw

day augurs a happy term for you," ejaculated the judge.

"These inauguration parties are very common affairs," remarked the general's wife languidly as she adjusted a lorgnette to her eyes. "They are attended by such common people."

"To whom do you refer?" inquired the president.

"Why, there's Harold Gray in the ball-room with his family," said she. "He is nothing but a ship-builder. He never held an office in his life. I can not endure to mingle with such common people."

"Did you not enjoy the fine parade to-day?" asked the president.

"The military part was quite magnificent," said she. "The general looked like the veritable Mars in shining armor, leading a brilliant host."

"Let's drink, let everybody drink," said the general. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mr. President," said the judge, "let me congratulate you on your fine address to-day. Your suggestion for the appropriation of a million dollars to build a monument for Mr. Smith was very timely."

A Strange Flaw

"What Smith was that?" asked the judge's wife.

"The Honorable John Smith," said the judge. "He was, indeed, a great man."

"Was he a general?" asked the lady.

"Oh, no," answered the judge.

"A mere civilian?" questioned she, somewhat contemptuously.

"Yes," interposed the president, "but he had held office all his life. A million dollars to build a monument to such a man is hardly ample. That sum will do to start with and later on sums could be added suited to our great prosperity. The country's gorged with wealth, our treasury overflowing, our granaries full, all Europe is our debtor on the balance sheet. Now is the time to show the nation's love for Smith."

"The world applauds your views," said the judge. "Congress will quickly act and soon Smith's monument will tower with Washington's."

"Let's drink his health! Ha! Ha! Ha!" said the general. "Hurrah for Smith! May he live long and prosper! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

A Strange Flaw

"Mr. Smith is dead," remarked the president.

"Let's drink to the health of Mrs. Smith, then," said the general.

"There is no Mrs. Smith," said the president.

"Well, then, let's drink to the health of the president! Ha! Ha! Ha!" said the general. "Three cheers for President Boodle, the Father of his Country, and the son of Yankee Doodle! Hip! Hip! Hurrah!"

This toast was drunk heartily, and then the president, standing up, raised his glass saying: "Here's to the Great American Nation, the richest and most prosperous commonwealth under the sun, the home for the free and the asylum for the oppressed!"

The entire company had raised their glasses to respond to this suggestion, when, to the surprise of all, there rushed in from the street a ragged girl of about ten years of age, looking wan and pale, exclaiming in piteous tones: "Please give me something to eat! I'm starving!"

The room in which this brilliant company were intending to dine was near the street and anyone passing by could catch a glimpse

A Strange Flaw

of the beauty and good cheer within. It was a cold, chilly night for Washington at this season of the year, and this child, pinched with cold and hunger, in her frenzy, failed to recognize the privacy of the apartment and the select character of the company within, and it being after midnight the guards at the entrance were careless and not expecting such an event, so she had succeeded in entering and was thus enabled to disturb the president's festivities. Her name was Mercy Bragg. She was the only child of Henderson Bragg, a person who, at one time, was well-to-do. He had graduated with high honors from Yale. His father subsequently died and left him a considerable estate, part of which had been dissipated by unwise investments, and a lawyer discovered a flaw in the will and beat him out of the remainder. When thrown upon his own resources he found he had learned but little at college that had qualified him to earn money. His education made him too proud to accept a position as a common laborer, and he had not energy enough to work his way up to an artisan or professional. He finally steered his bark into the uncertain sea of politics and anchored

A Strange Flaw

it to one of its shifting shoals. For a time he held a minor position in the Land Department, but a change of administration caused him to lose this, and thus, sailless and rudderless, he was cast adrift like a weather-beaten and battered hulk, the sport of misfortune and unfavorable gales. Failing to get other employment he borrowed until his inability to pay became generally known and his credit becoming exhausted necessity forced him to beg. In this practice it became necessary for him to become migratory and so he became a beggar, living where, how, and on what he could. His wife had died several years before and this daughter was the only relative that he had in the great city, and he was doing his utmost to provide her with something to satisfy the cravings of hunger and keep himself from starving to death.

Immense crowds were drawn to Washington to witness the inauguration, and opportunities for obtaining sustenance by begging seemed better than usual, but there had also come a great number of tramps and beggars to take advantage of these good prospects, and Bragg had been less successful than usual.

He saw that night that his child was get-

A Strange Flaw

ting desperate and he was much worried, but was greatly surprised when he saw her dodge into the entrance of the building where he knew these festivities were occurring. Her appearance before such a company and at such an inopportune moment, when the company were drinking to the great prosperity of the country, was most annoying. Somebody certainly was to blame and the president was quick to locate it, for he asked with becoming dignity if the guards of the room were drunk or asleep, and ordered the cause of the vexation to be instantly removed. Before his order could be executed, however, the child's father appeared. He was very much excited and called her to come out of the room. She did not obey, but gasping that she must have something to eat, staggered and fell to the floor. Seeing his child thus fainting from hunger he became frenzied and declaring that she should not starve to death in sight of plenty, attempted to snatch a portion of the food from one of the tables. Just then a large negro attendant struck him on the head. The blow was sufficient to cause him to fall unconscious on the floor. The girl, thinking her father was killed, uttered a few convul-

A Strange Flaw

sive gasps and swooned. From this she never recovered consciousness, and it was soon evident that she was dead. The judge declared her conduct highly improper, insisting that it was horrible that such a creature should die there.

This unfortunate incident immediately stampeded the ladies of the party and the gentlemen soon followed them out of the ball-room. A policeman was called to arrest and remove the offenders and he, finding that one of them was a corpse and the other a heart-broken father, allowed them to remain while the coroner's attendance was being procured. Thus left alone with his dead, save for the presence of the negro attendants who were guarding the food on the tables, Bragg became frantic, and thus he railed: "Oh, cruel proverty, to kill my only child! Here in this land where profligates have piled their domes and columns to the arching skies, where fraud and crime in monuments of spotless stone have made themselves immortal, here my poor dove has begged and plead for food until she starved to death!" He was interrupted in his bitter cry by John Duncan. Mr. Duncan, in the haste of his interview, had

A Strange Flaw

omitted some matters which he wished to enforce upon the president's attention, and had returned for that purpose. Duncan had been nursed in poverty and by hard labor and close economy had graduated at college in the same class with Bragg. He then had studied law in an office and been admitted to the bar. The hardships of early poverty had made him feel the value of money and he had concentrated his whole power to obtain it. As soon as he had accumulated a few dollars he launched into a sea of speculation, and by sitting up a little later at night and getting up a little earlier in the morning and studying a little harder than the rest of mankind he had succeeded in acquiring a large amount of property. He then had gone into railroad building upon the plan of having others build the road and give it to him. He had lobbied subsidies through Congress, gone into partnership with the Government, and by various enterprises and through many channels had become a multi-millionaire. The pendulum of his fortune had swung from poverty to plenty, while Bragg's had swung from plenty to poverty. When they parted, Bragg stood on the mountain and Duncan in the valley,

A Strange Flaw

but now they had changed places. Duncan was startled at the sight of such a distressing spectacle in such a place. He did not recognize his old classmate, and he exclaimed:

"What's this? Tramps, beggars, in here?"

Bragg replied in plaintive tones:

"You, John Duncan, don't you know me? I am Henderson Bragg. I knew you at Yale. This is Mercy. All I have to live for is dead."

"Yes, now I do recognize you," said Duncan. "What killed your daughter?"

"Poverty; damned poverty! My sweet child has begged and plead for food until she starved to death," answered Bragg, pathetically.

"That's hard," admitted Duncan. Then, with some disgust: "Where were you that you didn't get her food?"

"I did my best," protested Bragg.

"But you were the brightest boy of all our class. I can not understand. What have you done since then?"

"I got an office, then a wife, and then came this little girl. I lost the office, then my wife, and now she's gone," answered Bragg, in a choked voice. And then, as his eyes rested

A Strange Flaw

again upon the body of his child, he seemed to forget Duncan's presence and fell to weeping bitterly. Duncan, seeking to quiet him by diverting his attention, asked him about his father's estate, and being informed that it was all exhausted, asked regarding his own health.

"Alas!" answered Bragg. "My health is too good. Were I an invalid, a cripple, a misshapen wretch, whose sight would wring compassion's tears, my daughter might have lived. But I look so strong and fit for labor that none takes pity on me. When I could get no work I became a tramp. I was driven from town to town. And this poor girl! My God! What could I do?"

"Steal," was Duncan's stern answer.

"But," protested Bragg, "I never could do that. I'd rather die. My father was an honest man. I could not so disgrace his memory."

"Disgrace," echoed Duncan, in disgust. "You ragged beggar, did honor feed your starving child? Don't be a fool. Steal! Steal not as the vulgar steal, in violation of the law, but steal as princes and politicians steal, under the cloak of the law. Go not at

A Strange Flaw

night as fools and beggars do, but in full blaze of day, and take with you the officers of the law. Steal in the name of Justice."

"I do not know what you mean," said Bragg.

"Learn something and sell your silence. Discover a flaw in a title and buy it," continued Duncan.

"Buy it! Did you say, buy it?" asked Bragg. "Why, if arable land was selling for a cent a section I could not buy a rod of swamp."

"Find a flaw and see me," said the wise Duncan.

Bragg, feeling that perhaps he had found a friend, began to feel a faint spark of hope in his heavy heart.

"While working in the Land Department here," he said, "I saw a flaw in a land grant to a State. A word was so badly written in the grant that none could surely say whether it was 'including' or 'excluding,' because the scribe had so badly scrawled the first two letters."

"Well, what has the Land Department done?" asked Duncan.

"Held the several counties excluded from

A Strange Flaw

the grant and issued homestead patents to the settlers there," said Bragg.

Duncan seemed to be in deep thought. "Is there a railroad there?" he at length asked Bragg.

"No," answered Bragg.

"Then," said Duncan, "I have a scheme, to get them to build a railroad for us and get the State to grant us all these lands. The thought of a railroad will set them crazy."

"I'll be no partner in such a scheme," declared Bragg emphatically; "I'd rather be a tramp."

"And starve to death," sneered Duncan.

"Like my poor child," moaned Bragg, pitiously. Duncan, who was closely observing Bragg, saw by his manner that he was beginning to weaken, and said:

"Bragg, you must have money, or you will perish. Money means love, respect, renown, no matter how it's got. Though stained with blood and wet with widow's tears, or wrung from the withered hands of want, 'tis money still, and he who has it has the world's applause, and he who has it not, the world's contempt."

"The world hates me because I am poor,"

A Strange Flaw

said Bragg with feeling. "It glues its kisses to the robber's hand and rudely smites the palm outstretched for alms."

"That is too true," replied Duncan. "The thief that tears the lining from the chest of state and turns his office to a robbers' roost is not pursued with half the zeal the beggar is, and if perchance he may be caught the crooked laws will bend one way to let the thief escape, another way to keep the beggar in." As he spoke, the terrible realization of his wrongs came to Bragg and he said: "Duncan, your words are true. I've borne the cross of virtue long enough. This tramp shall tramp no more!"

"Bragg, you now talk sense," said Duncan. "Hold to it and I will help you to make millions. See me at the —— house to-morrow." And without further ceremony or thought regarding the disposal of the corpse, Duncan hurried from the scene into the ball-room.

Bragg again gazed on the dead body of his child as he said to himself:

"If all the millions could restore this child, with what a spirit would I strive. But she, alas, is gone. No wealth, however great, can

A Strange Flaw

bring her back again. But, such a death!
To starve to death in such a prosperous land!
To think their purse-proud, stony hearts denied their crumbs to this, my starving lamb!
A father's broken heart now grapples for revenge; and I shall wreak it on this heartless brood." Then, raising his clenched fist, he said:

"Monopolists and millionaires who pack your plunder from the nation's vaults and in the name of Justice rob mankind, and you poor fools who lick the rich man's shoes and worship fraud because it's robed in gold, and you who heard, unmoved, my poor child's cry for bread, I now give notice to you, one and all, that I propose to make the world my prey! Widows shall wail and orphans cry, and old men tear their frosty locks and howl with rage, and homeless thousands bite their lips and curse my scheme while I advance to be a millionaire. And now, hypocrisy, thou cool, keen, smiling villain, come to my aid! Teach me to coax and flatter fools with skill and lull the qualms of conscience into quiet. Banish both pity and remorse and make the sight of cruelty seem

A Strange Flaw

sweet, while I, with grace and polish unexcelled, proceed to grind!"

This burst of anguish was interrupted by the return of the policeman with one of the employes of the coroner's office. The employe made a few inquiries and the remains of the child were taken to the morgue. This wretched father on the following day accompanied the pine box containing its body to the Potters' Field, where was deposited the withered relic of his beloved.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER II

THE FLAW

"You may have had a narrow escape," said the talkative public stenographer, when John Duncan had just finished dictating an important letter.

"How's that?"

"Why, an evil looking lunatic came in a while ago and said he wanted to see you."

"What did he want of me?"

"He said he had an appointment with you."

"Didn't he give his name?"

"Yes, he said it was Bragg, or something of that kind."

"What became of him?"

"He was turned over to the police and taken to jail."

"Tell the parties who had him arrested to release him and have him shown up here at once."

"He may commit an assault upon you."

A Strange Flaw

"That's my affair. Do as I say."

When Bragg arrived he was indeed a sorry looking sight, but Duncan was friendly in his greeting, and after they had talked a few minutes Duncan said: "Well, I will call a cab and we will go and see that grant. I think you had better wear this duster; like the mantle of charity it will cover many defects." While speaking, Duncan was engaged in opening his valise, from whence he drew forth an old linen duster and handed it to Bragg. In a few moments the two men were in a cab on their way to the government land office. During the drive Duncan was silent and Bragg was too weak and sad to do much talking.

Finally they reached the place. The grant was found and examined. It was a grant by the United States to the State of for the purpose of internal improvement of all lands between certain boundaries, and then came a word written about this way, *excluding* so it was doubtful whether it was including or excluding, and then followed the description of a large tract of land, embracing several counties which had either

A Strange Flaw

been included or excluded from the grant. If included, the title had passed to the State to be disposed of for internal improvements as the legislature might choose, and it could grant them to aid in building a railroad. If not included, the title remained in the United States, and the lands might be entered by actual settlers under the homestead law. The latter construction had been adopted by the department and the lands conveyed by patents to settlers. These patents were void if the word was including. Duncan examined the grant with great care. Here was certainly a gigantic flaw. Bragg waited eagerly for some expression from Duncan, but he remained silent. Finally Duncan said, "I will see you to-morrow." Bragg's haggard face turned pale as he heard these words. Duncan noticed it and asked, "Will that be satisfactory? I want time to think the matter over. Can't you come then?"

"I don't know," said Bragg, despondently.

"Have you some other engagement?" inquired Duncan.

"No, but to tell the truth I haven't eaten anything since yesterday morning, and then I breakfasted on banana peelings and de-

A Strange Flaw

cayed vegetables, and unless I get something to eat soon, I may not be here to-morrow morning."

Duncan hesitated a moment; then he put his hand in his pocket and slowly drew forth a silver dollar. He looked at the coin and then at Bragg; then at the coin again, and finally he handed it to him, saying, "I will lend you a dollar until I determine what to do. Don't waste it, but make it go as far as you can." Then, taking a memorandum book from his inside pocket, he drew a pencil out of it and asked, "What is your first name? I have forgotten."

"Henderson," answered Bragg.

"Where is your address?"

"I have none at present."

Thereupon Duncan carefully wrote in the book the following:

"Henderson Bragg, Dr.,
To loan on account of flaw in grant. \$1.00."

Then the two men separated. Duncan to return to the hotel and Bragg to the nearest lunch counter.

It had been a long time since he had pos-

A Strange Flaw

sessed so much money, and he examined it with much care to assure himself that it was not counterfeit. He was almost afraid to show it lest he might be suspected of theft. The hard metal felt good to his palm and the picture of the Goddess of Liberty looked like an angel's face.

Duncan at once began to plan for taking advantage of the knowledge he had procured. He had no question but what the flaw could be utilized, but whether Bragg should be relied upon to do the work was the great problem. He tried to recall his old school days at Yale. The memory of them was hazy, but he recollected Bragg as a favorite in all the sports and as the best debater in the school, and he concluded that he must still possess the same talents. He considered him one of those men who lack power to originate schemes, but who can work very effectively in carrying out the directions of others. By the next morning he had concluded to give Bragg an opportunity to show what was in him. Even then, had Duncan thought of someone else who could have been used more effectually, he would not have hesitated to dis-

A Strange Flaw

miss Bragg without a word, and proceed to utilize the flaw through another agency.

When Bragg appeared in the morning he had greatly improved in appearance. The dollar had worked a transformation not only in the expression of his face but in his wearing apparel.

"I have concluded," said Duncan, "that the flaw is a good one and can be worked profitably."

"Now," said Bragg, "if we could only buy these lands from the State we could probably get them cheap."

"Buy nothing," said Duncan. "We can't afford to buy them. Bragg, you are green."

"How can we get them, then?"

"Why, steal them," said Duncan. "Get the legislature to give them to us."

"Do you think they would do that?" asked Bragg.

"Excepting the evergreen, there is nothing so green as the average State legislature," said Duncan. "We'll get the settlers to grade, bridge, and tie a railroad for us through that country and then get the legislature to give us all the land to help us buy the iron."

A Strange Flaw

"But, will the people be so foolish as to do that?" eagerly asked Bragg.

"Foolish! My God! Don't you know that nearly all the railroads in the United States have been built that way? The people build them and give them to the companies. Why, the passion of an Arab for his horse, a miser for his gold or a maid for her lover are weak and tame compared to that of western farmers and villagers for a railroad. The idea of getting one in a country where they have none sets them crazy. They will give you the money they owe to others, vote the roof from over their heads, and the bread out of the mouths of their children, and take their pay in railroad stock. There is no end to the absurdities that you can cause them to believe. Now, I propose that you and I and a few others, to make a show, organize a corporation for the purpose of constructing and operating a railroad. I'll furnish you with expense money, and you go out into the vicinity where these lands are and tell the people that a foreign corporation, whose agent you are, is contemplating building a railroad through there. That will excite them. One locality will strive against another, and you

A Strange Flaw

can get the people along the line to grade, bridge and tie the road and take their pay in railroad stock. When you have done that, in order to render the stock worthless, we will mortgage the road-bed to another corporation which we shall form, foreclose the mortgage, sell the road, bid it in ourselves and then get the legislature to grant us the land to furnish it. We can sell a part of the lands, buy the rolling stock and complete and own the road."

"But," said Bragg, "won't that be too severe on the inhabitants? They will all be deprived of their homes after building the road for us? Will the people endure being driven from their homes? Won't they rise up in wrath, tear up our railroad and massacre us?"

"Endure it!" repeated Duncan. "They'll have to endure it. We violate no law. Besides, we will have the army and the navy of the United States at our backs. They may sputter around a little, but they will soon settle down. The first thing for you to do, Bragg, is to visit the tailor's. I will loan you some money so that you can fit yourself out. The world thinks rags are dishonest

A Strange Flaw

and filth a crime. When you return we will proceed to organize a corporation."

"Is it necessary to do that? Can't we carry on the business as well without?" inquired Bragg.

"Why, no," answered Duncan. "The law would then hold us responsible for our acts. That's just what we want to avoid. We want a corporation to receive the blame and losses while we receive the profits. A corporation is an intangible, invisible creature, which exists only in contemplation of law. It cannot be weighed, measured, imprisoned or hung; but it can weigh, measure, imprison and hang others. It is created by man, and although it neither eats nor drinks, may live forever, unless the high and holy will of its creators take its life. It has no soul, no breath, no feeling, no compassion. The frigid ice of Winter and the scorching sun of Summer unheeded come and go. Mangled and bleeding from its iron hands the helpless raise their eyes imploringly for aid. It takes no notice of their cries. Sheltered and guarded by its form invisible, its agents with impunity rob and plunder whom they wish. The spider spins his web and the unwary insect sees it

A Strange Flaw

not until too late, and for its folly answers with its life. So we scheming men, when we hunt gudgeons, lay our nets and spin our webs and smile to see the fools rush in. We do not kill them as the spiders do their prey. We shear them and let them live to grow another fleece which we can shear again. To gild our conduct with the gloss of honor we take our charter from the government. The great seal of the State covers our crimes and seals up suspicious eyes. Being thus invested with superior power, we form our articles and pass our laws, the only ones that we obey. Clothed in this artificial shape our movements are so subtle, mysterious and complex, that gaping idiots stand aghast, and in obsequious and fawning attitudes empty their wallets in our hands."

"I think I understand," said Bragg. "We create this invisible agent in order that we may use its name. We really cheat and steal on our own account, but by the adoption of certain rules and regulations in doing so, we are not held personally responsible, and by fiction of law all our misdeeds are saddled on this nonentity which exists only in imagination and cannot be punished. A splendid

A Strange Flaw

scheme, Mr. Duncan, worthy the conception of Satan himself. What will we name this offspring of our minds?"

"We must give it a good name. Let me see," said Duncan.

"How would it do to call it the 'Gull and Swindle Railroad Company,' in honor of the Goddess Gull and her handmaid Swindle, who you say preside over railroad building?" inquired Bragg ironically.

"Wouldn't do at all. That is too suggestive. As we intend to have it become insolvent in about a year, how would it do to call it 'The Sound and Reliable R. R. Co.?' " said Duncan.

"A very good name, indeed," said Bragg.

A short time after this conversation the two men went to New York City, and used the names of a few of Duncan's office clerks with their own and organized a corporation for the purpose of building and operating a railroad. They provided for the issuance of six million dollars of stock, and the election of officers every two years. Henderson Bragg was made president, John Duncan, secretary and treasurer.

Before starting for the West Bragg re-

A Strange Flaw

ceived his final instructions from John Duncan, and his parting words to him were, "Bragg, be very good. You can't play piety too strong. Be patient, speak like an angel of charity, and mask your purposes with pious smiles."

Thus admonished, one fine morning in the early summer, Bragg started for the west, fully equipped to carry out the plan. Dressed in fashionable attire, a large gold watch chain and fob, a high silk hat, a well shaven face, he looked every inch the well-to-do promoter. The change was great. He was now going to the country which he had tramped over less than a year before, and been hunted down as a criminal because he was a beggar. He was going back as a beggar in one sense, but not one that asks for a meal of victuals. He went to masquerade as a railroad magnate, and beg the people to benefit themselves by helping him.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER III

A SMILING LAND

The tract of country which lay in the shadow of the flaw discovered by Henderson Bragg embraced in its area several counties, and was indeed a smiling land. Its green landscapes were dotted with thousands of happy homes, in which industry and frugality dwelt together. And many a little bustling village basked in the light on its sunny slopes or nestled in the forests of its valleys, by its winding streams.

Thither, in earlier days, a thrifty and hopeful people had come to make their homes, and had there labored patiently and cheerfully amid perils, privations, heat and cold, until they had converted the desert of the savage into a garden of civilization. Many had come rosy with the flush of youth, who were now trembling with the feebleness of age. Time and toil had furrowed their brows and unstrung their nerves; and their be-

A Strange Flaw

dimmed eyes warned them of the approaching shadows of death. Their sole reward for a life of toil was the sight of the little cottage they had builded, the farm they had tended, and the contemplation that, when the fast expiring light of life, which now flickered in a dusky twilight, should go out in darkness from the earth, and their eyes should no more behold the old homestead and the avails of their life work, it would still remain to bless the children they had reared.

In the summer of their strength they had received patents for their lands from the United States, and while the ravages of fire and the devouring tornado might desolate the surface, yet they believed that their titles were perfect to the soil itself; and that in it they had a permanent estate. Little did they dream that, lurking in the musty archives of the government, an "e" needed a loop, and an "x" looked like an "n," and that from defects as small as a gnat's egg a giant would be born, whose evil genius might destroy the whole. Unconscious of the cloud that was gathering, boy and man, maid and matron, toiled cheerfully on, building and beautifying their homes, and preparing them for Duncan

A Strange Flaw

and Bragg; as the happy birds build their nests and nurse their nestlings in frolic and song, heeding not the approaching hawk, who watches them from his eyrie and in his own time descends and devours all in a moment.

Near the eastern boundary of this tract of land there was a beautiful village, which we will call Littletown. It nestled in the bosom of a green oak forest, on the sunset shore of a lovely lake. Within its bounds were gently rising hills, pleasant knolls, valleys and meadow lands; and through its verdant vales rippled pure and ever-flowing rills, and from its hillsides, here and there, cool, constant springs gushed forth their grateful streams, inviting all to slake their thirst. Self-quarried rocks lay loosely on the earth around, or peeped in myriads from beneath the soil, shaped by the God of nature for the builder's hand, that all who wished might come and build a home.

Spring came and clad its hills and vales in green and filled its woods and fields with choicest flowers, which bloomed untilled, unasked, and with their fragrance filled the

A Strange Flaw

bracing air, and by their beauty taught the world to love.

Then Summer came, and made the meadows red with berries, which all might freely pick and still enough be left to pay the bounteous earth for its delicious fruit. The stalks of ripening grain, in massy phalanx stood, and bent their golden heads, reared from the earth with just sufficient toil to sweeten the owner's taste. And blackberries ripened on the heath-girt vales and bushy slopes, as free as air, as plentiful as heart could wish.

And Autumn came, and painted woods and fields in golden hues, and nuts in copious showers fell from its trees and bushes brown.

Then Winter came, not harsh, but mild, when peace, rest, joy, and social life were clustered round the crackling grate, where love, by stories, games and friendly chats, with mirth and music could while away the fleeting hours. And just as all were tired of Winter's reign, fresh as the morning's dawn, young Spring broke forth again, and the heart leaped gladly while the spring birds sang.

Thus passed the circling years, seasoned with such sweet variety and change of scene,

A Strange Flaw

that none by monotony might tire, and rural life tripped on from youth to age, as the traveler going from clime to clime beguiles his hours away, until his journey ends when he had thought it scarce begun.

Such was the village and surrounding scenes, that he who looked upon its smiling lake, girt with embowering groves, and filled with sporting fish; who wandered up and down its peaceful streams, and heard its singing birds, and plucked its beauteous flowers, and tilled its fertile soil; who, from the distance, saw its spires arise among the trees, when morning's rosy beams tinted its tops with gold and gilded the curling smoke that upwards from its cottages ascended; who breathed its pure and bracing air and slaked his thirst from out its flowing springs, must from his heart have said: "Omnipotence has done his utmost here to make a beauteous and a happy land. There is no need of want or misery where earth, air, sky, forest and flower combine to bless mankind, and every breeze whispers peace."

To this delightful village the Fall before, Bragg had tramped in search of food, shelter and employment. In such a land of plenty

A Strange Flaw

and profusion such a search ought not to be in vain. He came there then as a beggar. Necessity couched in rags on every limb, and shivered in the chill air of the Autumn. Hunger and want pleaded for food and shelter from every joint and motion of his body. It was after an exceedingly fruitful harvest. The granaries were heaped with mountains of food, the cellars were crammed with delicious fruits, and the people were rendering thanks to God for his bounties. It was on a Sabbath evening that Bragg applied at the home of Oliver Cromwell Jinks, a prosperous merchant, and asked for supper, offering to work in payment. Mrs. Jinks replied, "I don't keep hotel, sir."

"But they will not keep me at the hotel," pleaded Bragg. "I have no money. I am willing to work for you; I will do anything. Please take pity on a poor man who has no place to go, and no friends to help him."

"Sit down on the step, you lazy, worthless fellow," said she, "and I will see what I can do for you."

The proud soul of Mrs. Jinks was deeply stirred. She sought out her husband and asked him what to do. His conscience could

A Strange Flaw

not bear the idea of encouraging vagrancy by feeding a tramp. Upon reflection he thought it his duty to enforce the law. So he slyly slid out of the back door, found a constable, had him arrest Bragg for vagrancy, and take him to jail. There Bragg got food and shelter for the night, and was released the next morning on his promise to leave town at once, which he did. But when the same Henderson Bragg, one fine June morning, dressed in the height of fashion, came in on the stage—not to ask for a supper, or a crust of bread, but to ask the people to build a railroad and give it to him—no one recognized him and his reception was very different.

As soon as it was known that the president of the "Sound and Reliable Railroad Company" was at the Globe House, the business men of the place called upon him and vied with each other in offers to help him. He was entreated by many to make his home with them while he remained. As Bragg had before wondered at the niggard cruelty of the people, he was now amazed at their kindness and generosity. With a malicious twinkle in his eye he said to himself:

A Strange Flaw

“What a contemptible and trifling race are these villagers. When I asked them for a crust of bread they had me jailed, and now they beg me to take their food. But here’s the odds, ’tis not the vagrant that they punish, ’tis his clothes. The prince asks for a subsidy of thousands. A million pockets answer yes. The tramp asks for a crust and gets a prison. The smallness of the asking makes the crime. Knowing that I was poor they fed me on crusts, buttered with gall. They now think I am rich and offer me sorghum, expecting to be paid in honey. I will pay the hypocrites in hypocrisy, the cruel in cruelty, and the selfish in selfishness. Let the gullions who have gaped their mouths so broadly to swallow me, swallow my bait and I will rift the clouds long enough to give them a gleam of their own kind of justice.”

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER IV

THE JINKS FAMILY

Of all those who resided in this beautiful village the most aristocratic was this Jinks family. It consisted of three persons—father, mother and daughter. Oliver Cromwell Jinks was the potentious cognomen of the father. Elizabeth Stuart Jinks, the ponderous appellation of the mother. This proud pair were giant offsprings of English soil. They were not monarchs exactly; they were imitations of monarchs. They had all the conceit and arrogance of kings, without a kingdom; all the strut and stiffness of nobility, without a vassalage. They were fair samples of the excrescences sloughed off by monarchical governments. Born and bred in serfdom, reared in vassalage, and galled by hereditary lords and gentry, they had left England and come to America to help rule it. When they came to Littletown, they tried at once to imitate the conduct of their op-

A Strange Flaw

pressors in the old world. Nature had provided them with the insolence, ignorance and conceit necessary, but they lacked authority in law. The people of Littletown looked with laughter and contempt upon their efforts to ape royalty. Nevertheless, Oliver Cromwell assumed the role of dictator, prompter and critic in all the transactions of the village, and Elizabeth Stuart employed herself in arranging the ranks and castes of the people, according to English rules of birth and avocation. She claimed to trace the blood in her veins back through several generations of unknown persons to some prominent Englishman. They were both conscientious people, but the current of their life blood had been poisoned in youth by the false pride and unnatural condition of English society.

'Tis the principal curse of monarchy that it engenders the spirit of oppression to such an extent that even slaves are tyrants. The treatment the serf receives from his master he gives to his children, and the frown that bristles upon the brow of the monarch curdles the countenance of every underling down to the very beasts of the field. Cruelty is catching. A cruel man will have a cruel dog. So

A Strange Flaw

the dispositions of these two persons were very much unsuited to American society. Their aristocracy was annoying, but being shoddy, was not dangerous. You plant a melon patch near to a pumpkin patch and the melons will ape the pumpkins, and become coarse, corky, tasteless things, utterly useless as melons and worthless as pumpkins. So these plebeian melons, having grown up by the side of the aristocratic pumpkins of England thought themselves "some pumpkins," but were not. They had merely lost their national vigor and had become an insipid, squashy growth; of small value as American citizens, and a sort of parody upon nobility.

A sweet offset to this unattractive pair was Jennie Jinks, their blooming daughter of twenty years. She was of medium height and in her form both grace and symmetry combined. Note in the rosy east morn's earliest kiss, such the warm crimson that bloomed on her cheeks, and when the water-lily is freshest in its bed, see then its pure and creamy tint; such was the hue her neck and forehead wore. And from her fair, full brow, her hair in jetty ringlets backward to her shoulders rolled. And in her eyes fount-

A Strange Flaw

ains of unshed tears sparkled like stars and a sweet piety lifted her eyeballs like a saint's in prayer, and from the depths of those gray, dreamy orbs, love and compassion looked into the world. And then her mouth, how small and gently curved, just large enough to kiss, and oh! her ruby lips, how tenderly they pouted and promised love. So sweetly they were pursed that one would think Nature, in making them, had made a kiss and left it there to tempt mankind. And when she smiled love danced in every dimple in her cheeks and looked from every corner of her eyes. Her step was light as zephyr, her voice was clear and sweet, and when she spoke, as oft she did, of love or sympathy, her hungry hearers in silence drank the honey of her words. In form and voice she seemed an instrument that nature had made and tuned to sing a song of love. Her soul was filled with poetry and her nimble fancy often left the narrow earth, and on imaginary pinions soared to uncreated realms. She fed on romance and her soul in rapture hung upon the flowery lines of lovelorn bards, or wandered with some fabled hero through his perilous exploits, shared all his dangers, pitied

A Strange Flaw

all his pains, forgave his errors, admired his courage, worshipped his fidelity and learned to love him as he journeyed on; and as the bard's caprice caused him on flowery or in thorny paths to tread she smiled or wept until the tale was done. In her hours of solitude, her mind pictured a little home where one who loved her more than life might share with her a love as true as heaven, as shoreless as eternity. This had been her dream from early girlhood, and as the current of her years rolled on and her nature unfolded like the blooming flower, this dream became more vivid and her heart longed more and more to find the love it panted to bestow.

She need not have waited long for her love, save for one sentiment—'twas pride, the thistle that grew in paradise. It was her just inheritance; she had nursed it from her mother's breast; she had caught it in the shadow of a throne. This pride caused her to hope she might wed a titled hero, and in her dreams of bliss the brawny hands and swarthy faces of the young men of Littletown were not seen. But, while lovers are plenty, heroes are scarce, and wearying at last in

A Strange Flaw

waiting, her heart began to cling to less romantic forms and features.

The pompous manners of Oliver Cromwell Jinks made him unpopular, and his trade dwindled, until he could no longer afford a clerk in the store; so, when he went home to meals, or had an errand out, he required Jennie to stay in the store for him. He and Mrs. Jinks had many discussions before they had concluded that it would be proper to have Jennie perform such service. Finally, they settled the matter by deciding that, while it would be disgraceful for her to do such work for another, yet as Oliver Cromwell Jinks imparted his own nobility to his business, it was no disgrace for anyone to help him. Accordingly, Jennie was very frequently at the store, engaged in looking after her father's interests while he was away.

On one very rainy and disagreeable afternoon in the early spring, while Jennie was thus engaged, there came into the store, to get out of the rain, a country lad, by the name of Harry Hawkins. He was the only son of Mary Hawkins. His father had died when he was an infant and he had been supported by the toil and frugality of the mother

A Strange Flaw

until he was able to assist in supplying their humble wants. They lived in a snug little cottage on a small farm near the village. Inured to toil from childhood, and exposed to extremes of heat and cold, Harry had acquired, at the age of twenty-two, a strong, well-knit frame and a most robust health. He had light hair, blue eyes, and the ruddy, but brawny, complexion of tan and freckles, such as the sun and wind of western climes produce. He had arrived at that period when a young man appears the most awkward and ungainly, for he then has the form of a man, but the mind of a boy. There was little in Harry that differed from ordinary country lads, except the reflective appearance of his face. A somewhat serious and studious expression peered from his eyes and wrinkled on his forehead. What education he possessed he had acquired winters in the district school, and studying by the fireside at home. Early in youth he had caught an ambition to be a learned man, and while others spent their leisure hours attending parties and balls, or going to town, and chatting on the street corners, Harry was with his books, greedily drinking in knowledge on 'some new subject.

A Strange Flaw

It had been the steadfast hope of his mother that he would take to the farm, work it and make a home for her when she was able to work no longer. His disposition of a book-worm troubled her, and though he always worked well, yet there was an abstracted expression on his face, and sometimes she would hear him muttering to himself when alone, and in these mutterings he never mentioned cattle, corn, or wheat, but seemed to be absorbed upon topics wholly foreign to the farm. He lived not in the present, but in the future.

He had often been down to the store before and had watched Jennie at her work. He had noted how patiently she had answered the thousand questions of the five-cent customer; and took down and unrolled a hundred bolts of calico, and unfurled several rods of ribbon, as she listened to the monotonous comments of the old lady who finally went away, saying she would think it over before she bought.

It was a dull day in the mercantile trade. No customers were in. Mr. Jinks was out. Harry and Jennie had often spoken before, but that day they had nothing to do but to

A Strange Flaw

talk to each other. Oh! that I knew some tender tongue, some language liquid as the oil of rose, whose every word is perfume, and would slip from lips as gently as the dew descends, as soft as lover's sighs, that I might tell how love was born, and bound in one these two young hearts. I see them talking there. At first they speak of common things, matters of little interest and in a formal way, as if abashed to think that they should speak at all. The eyes of each soon lose the cold, retiring glance, and gleam with interest, as the little words, like carrier doves, pass back and forth between them, carrying a thread invisible to weave in one their hearts and lives. The hours fly by unheeded. They cease to talk about the world, and now speak of themselves, their lives, their aspirations, joys and sorrows, and then of things they love. Their eyes grow brighter and their tones lower and more tender as unconsciously they draw nearer together. They are speaking of friendship. I hear her tell in accents sweet and melting as music on the midnight waters, with lips rosy as the blushing sunset, which almost tremble as they speak, of how she has longed for friendship in the past;

A Strange Flaw

how her soul has yearned for someone to confide in and tell her joys and sorrows—who would be dear and true to her. I see his eyelids quiver and the joy he feels reflected in his eyes as he approaches and grasps her hand, saying: “Oh! Jennie, let me be that friend. I have so longed for the friendship, for the love, of such a dear, good girl as you, but I dared not speak before.”

She did not answer, but turned away her head. He stood and held her hand in his, and when he felt it grasp his closer and closer he asked her for a kiss. She seemed to hesitate and tremble for a moment, between love and fear; he felt her hand quiver, but she spoke not. All at once she turned her blushing face towards him and he gladly clasped her in his arms, their trembling lips meeting in a shower of quick, passionate kisses, mixed with tender sighs. As the parched earth devours the refreshing rain—as the hungry babe eagerly drains the mother’s breast—so their thirsty souls drank in each other’s love.

How long they thus remained need not be told. We have followed them into the inextricable labyrinth of love. Let us leave them in their joy. At the morning’s dawn,

A Strange Flaw

they knew each other only as common friends; when night came the maiden breathed a new prayer to heaven. 'Twas for the farmer lad whose life had touched hers. And, miles away, in a little cottage among the trees, the farmer lad dreamed of the sweet curly-haired English girl, who had nestled on his breast.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER V

RAILROAD BUILDING

On the next day after his arrival Bragg began on his railroad scheme. He decided at first, to see some lawyer who was well acquainted and could advise him how to proceed. As he started down the street he saw an old weather-beaten sign hanging out from a plain wooden building, bearing on either side the inscription, "Enoch Foghorn, Lawyer and Notary Public."

"That sign," mused Bragg, "has hung there many a year. The owner is undoubtedly an old resident and poor. I will go in." When he entered he found Enoch Foghorn seated at his desk.

Foghorn was about fifty years old, slender and scrawny. He had a hawkbill nose, a grim solemn face and coarse dark hair mixed with gray. His eyes were black and very piercing in their gaze, which was stern and critical. He slightly curved his upper lip

A Strange Flaw

when speaking, so as to show his teeth. He was by nature plain, blunt and sarcastic. Spurning anything like hypocrisy he loved to unmask a hypocrite and lash his naked ugliness. He possessed much intellectual ability, legal learning, and a high moral character, but had not been very successful at the bar. He scorned to smile and play the hypocrite. He lacked the ability to slime a fool over with flattery and then swallow him. Thus it is in law. Smiling hypocrisy often sits enthroned upon the bench, while honor pleads in vain for justice at the bar.

"Is this Mr. Foghorn?" asked Bragg, addressing the occupant of the desk.

"What do you want?" answered Foghorn.

"When you have leisure, I wish to talk with you."

"Tell me what you want and I will tell you whether you can talk to me about it or not," was the curt reply of Foghorn.

Bragg was a little astonished to find such dignity and importance in a man so poorly surrounded and was somewhat disconcerted at this blunt reply, but soon rallied again.

"I am the President of the Sound and Re-

A Strange Flaw

liable Railroad Company," said he somewhat pompously.

"Where is that road?" asked Foghorn.

"It is not built yet, but I will show you where we are going to build it," said Bragg, as he pulled a map out of his pocket and began to open it.

"You are president of this paper railroad. What do you want of me?" demanded Foghorn.

"I want you to assist me in building it," replied Bragg in most polite and persuasive tones.

"I'm not a railroad builder. This is a law office," responded Foghorn.

"You don't understand me. I want you to use your influence with the people to get them to take stock and aid in building the road. I am willing to pay for it," said Bragg.

"I don't sell any influence. Good day, sir," answered Foghorn abruptly and began writing.

Bragg could say no more. He had struck a solid wall of honor and could go no further. He hesitated a moment, then arose and left, very much chagrined.

A Strange Flaw

As he passed up the street he noticed a fine brick building on the corner of a block with an ornamental stone front, in which was chiseled over the arched doorway the word "Bank," and farther up the street in the same building there was an ornamental side door, by which there hung a finely flourished gilt sign with the words, "Timothy Bronze, banker, lawyer and broker. Money to loan."

"Here is the place to start," soliloquized Bragg. "What an ass I was to go to a poor man's office, and especially an old one, to help me carry out my scheme. Aged men who possess intelligence and are poor, are generally honest. Such men are of no use to me. That shaving machine, called a bank, sits there in a public place like a spider's web, ready to catch those who may saunter in attracted by its fine front and display of mahogany counters; and this Timothy Bronze sitting in his private office, like the spider behind the web, comes out and fleeces these foolish human flies when they are once caught. I'll call on him."

After walking up four short steps, Bragg was in the presence of Timothy Bronze,

A Strange Flaw

who as soon as he saw this prosperous looking individual entering, jumped up and grasped him by the hand, at the same time offering him a seat in a cushioned rocker, apparently very much delighted to see him.

Timothy Bronze was a very loosely made, awkward and ungainly creature, and had the appearance of a being that nature had originally started for an idiot, but changed her mind when the job was only half completed. He had red hair, expressionless blue eyes and a freckled face. His mouth was set in slant-wise, one corner extending about an inch farther down on his chin than the other and his lips were as colorless and destitute of expression as a slit in a piece of leather, and moved when he talked as if they were hung on rubber hinges. His spinal column was nearly straight and his stomach and viscera hung as loosely upon it as a sack of waste paper. His legs were loosely jointed and turned up at the bottom with feet that spread out like the mouth of the Mississippi. Yet notwithstanding his ridiculous features, there was something in his appearance that indicated that he had more mental ability than nature ordinarily gives her children. He was

A Strange Flaw

capable of the most outrageous blunders and the most remarkable inventions. At one time his eyes would stream with tears of pity for the poor and oppressed, at another he would take from the poor man his last shilling and smile with infernal glee as he slid out of his clutches naked into the world. He was such a complete mixture of vice and virtue, piety and profanity, wisdom and folly, that it was difficult to tell which predominated.

A bland smile lit up Timothy's irregular features as he expressed his great pleasure in meeting Bragg.

"Where have I met you before, Mr. Bragg; were you not in attendance at the last political convention?"

"No, I think not," said Bragg. "I was then making a tour of the United States."

"You look so much like an acquaintance of mine that it seems as if we were old friends."

"I am president of the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company of New York City, and I came to get you to help me," said Bragg.

"I will be only too glad to render you any assistance in my power. But come, let's go

A Strange Flaw

and take something," said Bronze, his countenance beaming with good nature.

"Agreed," said Bragg. Whereupon Bronze having adjusted an old slouch hat on the back of his head, escorted the president of the Sound and Reliable Railroad to a nearby saloon, where they sat down at a table. Bragg had found a congenial spirit in Bronze, and when they both had become sufficiently animated with liquor to be fluent there was practically no limit to the soft soap with which they lathered each other.

Bronze began:

"It must be very annoying to you, Mr. Bragg, to leave your palatial home in the great city and submit to the poor entertainment of such a little village as this."

"Oh, no," said Bragg, "I have grown tired of luxury and splendor and I greatly enjoy your beautiful place. I must say I did not hope to meet such very pleasant and intelligent people here. Have you been West long, Mr. Bronze?"

"But a few years," replied Bronze, "but long enough to appreciate the society of a true gentleman from the East. Oh, I am so

A Strange Flaw

glad I met you, Mr. Bragg. Let's have another drink."

After drinking Bronze continued:

"If I had a place fit to entertain you I would urge you while you remain here, to make your home at my house. My wife is intensely fond of the society of distinguished men. She would be very glad to meet you."

"I would be only too happy to meet Mrs. Bronze," said Bragg. "Men of intelligence know how to select admirable women. Have you any children, Mr. Bronze?"

"I have a blooming daughter of sixteen who would be very happy to see you. She worships heroes," said Bronze proudly. Bragg saw he had touched a tender spot and continued:

"Then you have but one. Isn't it strange, Mr. Bronze, that while fools breed so rapidly, men of genius rarely have more than one or two children?"

"Stranger yet," said Bronze, "that men of the rarest intelligence never marry. I think you said you were unmarried, Mr. Bragg?"

"I fear I should not long remain so," said Bragg, "were I to be thrown into the

A Strange Flaw

society of your daughter, if I may be permitted to judge of her beauty and intelligence from her father."

This last was too much for Bronze. To have it insinuated that he was beautiful moved him deeply, and he leered at Bragg as he said in a somewhat doubtful tone: "Mr. Bragg, I fear you flatter me. It is so natural for great men to overestimate their friends. They imagine in others the qualities which they possess themselves."

And so, like suckers feeding upon each other's blubber, they continued until the ringing of the bell called Bragg to the hotel and Bronze to his home.

Bragg saw that he had found in Bronze a tool fashioned to his purpose, and concluded to engage him to assist in pushing forward the railroad enterprise, and after he had eaten he went again to Bronze's office and laid the whole scheme before him, as it had been concocted by Duncan. Bronze eagerly embraced the opportunity to help carry it out.

"How can we best get the people to grade, bridge and tie the road through this locality?" asked Bragg.

A Strange Flaw

"People, like cattle, go in droves," said Bronze. "Salt the leaders and they all follow. If we can get George W. Lyer, editor of the Littletown *"Fountain of Truth,"* and Elder Goodman and a few others, the rest will follow."

"It will be hard to get Mr. Lyer, I fear," said Bragg.

"No trouble at all," replied Bronze. "He has no shame nor conscience. Just subsidize him, give him a share in the steal."

"I believe you spoke of a minister—Goodman, I think you said. Can we reach him easily?" said Bragg.

"Easy enough. Tell him the patronage of your railroad will be used in the interest of his political party. He is insane on that subject. He has converted the Church of God into an adder's nest to do homage to political vipers. He has debased the cause of temperance into a hobby horse to carry sots into office. He has swallowed, unassorted and unmasticated, every doctrine put forth by his party, and has found Scripture to justify every robbery its leaders have committed. If you want a man to forge the name

A Strange Flaw

of Jesus Christ to documents fetid with fraud and rank with iniquity, call on him."

"So you think these can be easily secured. Do you know of anyone in the community who would be likely to work against us and give us trouble?" queried Bragg.

"Yes, yes," said Bronze, "there is an aristocratic old Englishman who keeps a store over there, he will be almost certain to work against us. He always denounces everything that anyone else originates."

"Is there any way I can reach him?" questioned Bragg.

Bronze studied a moment, then finally looked up with a gleeful smile on his face. "Yes, he has one soft side. It's a peculiar one. He has a very pretty daughter who he is very anxious to marry to some person of distinction. If you appear to take a great fancy to her you would have him with you. It's the only way I know of. If you don't make friends with him and his family from the first he will surely balk."

"Then," said Bragg, "I'll make it my first duty to see this Englishman and his pretty daughter."

So they talked on until the middle of the

A Strange Flaw

afternoon and then Bronze took Bragg over to Jinks' store and introduced him to Oliver Cromwell as the great railroad king from the East, of immense wealth and distinction. He said to Oliver: "Mr. Jinks, I told my friend, the Honorable Henderson Bragg, that he must make haste to get acquainted with the best people of our village and especially did I desire him to meet you, your estimable wife, and lovely daughter."

Mr. Bragg smiled loftily and said that he was very happy to be acquainted with Mr. Jinks, and hoped that he might soon have the pleasure of meeting his very excellent lady and beautiful daughter; but as he had an appointment within the hour they would be kind enough to excuse him and he would see them again a little later. Mr. Jinks remonstrated against his going so soon, and insisted that he was urgent in his request that he remain and chat a while. Whereupon Bronze rejoined:

"After business hours will be time enough. Mr. Bragg is at present in my custody. I intended to have him sup with me to-night, but if you insist upon it I will release him

A Strange Flaw

from this engagement and let him go to tea with you."

"I shall most certainly insist upon it," said Jinks.

The arrangements were then made, and Bragg and Bronze left the store and went to the office of the "*Fountain of Truth*." The "*Fountain of Truth*" was edited by A. Lyer and George Washington Lyer. They were twins. The first was a very lean, slender and dark complexioned individual. The second was fat, stout and robust and of a light complexion. The former was a Presbyterian, the latter a Universalist. The lean one was a Prohibitionist, the fat one in favor of license. The lean man did the collecting, and the fat man the entertaining. They wrote with different pens. What one praised the other blamed. What the first loved, the second hated. They were never unanimous unless they were bribed, and not always then, for sometimes they were hired on opposite sides. Thus we see that the "*Fountain of Truth*" was a double-barreled weapon. It carried both fire and water, oil and resin, vinegar and honey. It might be used equally well as a fire kindler or fire extinguisher,

A Strange Flaw

a lubricator or a brake, a cathartic or an emetic, or it might be used for both at the same time. Being able to take both sides of every question, it was always right and always wrong; unless its editors were both hired upon one side.

When Bragg and Bronze arrived at the office, they found George Washington Lyer at his desk writing an editorial on the "Martyrs for Truth," and A. Lyer composing a scandal on a female missionary. After being introduced, Bragg stated that he wished to employ the "*Fountain of Truth*" to flow a little in favor of the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company.

"All right, all right," said G. W. Lyer. "The '*Fountain of Truth*' is at your service, sir. Indicate what you want. We are authors of all kinds of truth. We can make truth on any subject. Will you see a sample, sir? Here is a treatise on the relation between intemperance and seed corn, wherein I prove that the vital principle of seed corn is alcohol, and that man could not live an hour without it, and that prohibition would be such an insult to God Almighty that He would abolish alcohol and kill us all. My

A Strange Flaw

brother has just finished a very able editorial showing that over-production produces poverty and hard times. We can write anything you want, sir, anything. But we must have pay, sir. We can't run the '*Fountain of Truth*' for nothing. If you want me to write an editorial proving you to be a saint and a martyr and your company to be men who give away fortunes for recreation, shell out and the '*Fountain of Truth*' shall so spout; if not, sir, the '*Fountain of Truth*' will show you to be an impostor, a fraud and a cheat, and your company a band of thieves organized for robbery. The '*Fountain of Truth*' never remains silent, sir. It is never dry. It always spouts either gall or honey, either oil or glue."

Bragg offered to pay him in stock at the rate of a dollar a line. To this the worthy editor responded:

"The '*Fountain of Truth*' is not fed on chaff. Its editors are not asses. They can't be bought by stock in a paper railroad. We must have a share, sir, of any tax which we help to get voted."

At length they were able to agree and the

A Strange Flaw

"Fountain of Truth" was engaged to advocate the scheme.

This accomplished, the Hon. Henderson Bragg, President of the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company, repaired to the hotel to arrange his toilet for the tea at the Jinks cottage.

A Strange Flaw.

CHAPTER VI

A CLOUD

We left Jennie and Harry standing in the rosy light of the dawn of first love, dreaming they had discovered an ocean of bliss out of which they might forever drink. Their thoughts, their hopes and their desires so sweetly blended that had no other hand played discord their lives had passed like a joyous melody. The future seemed to smile and promise heaven. Grief gaped behind that smile.

When Mrs. Jinks learned that her daughter loved Harry, she burst into a towering passion and swore by the blood of her ancestry that their associations should immediately cease. She forbade her seeing or speaking to Harry again, threatening to disinherit and turn her out of doors if she disobeyed, and in order that they might not meet each other she had Jennie cease clerking in the store. This had the usual result.

A Strange Flaw

If you want to weld young lovers together, strive to wedge them apart. By means of this foolish course, many attachments, ephemeral in their character, that might otherwise have been dissolved in a short time, have been strengthened into bonds unseverable.

Jennie pleaded with her mother in tears and sobs, kissed her and asked her so kindly to just permit her to see Harry once a week, or once a month, just for a little while, and begged her to alter her stern decree, but she firmly refused. Then the tears disappeared and Jennie's pretty eyes snapped as she bit her lip and clenched her little hand and said, "You may be cruel enough to keep me from seeing Harry, but you can't keep me from loving him."

After the meeting in the store, which we have described, and before Jennie's mother learned of her daughter's love, she and Harry had passed many a happy hour together. At the store, while Mr. Jinks was absent, love found many an opportunity, and after his return and Jennie had started home, Harry would overtake her and they would stray

A Strange Flaw

from the direct path to the lake, and arm in arm stroll along its sandy beach.

There grew a tall elm upon the little point of land extending out into the lake. Under this they often sat during the beautiful afternoons of the bright spring days, and drank those draughts of bliss which words cannot describe and none but lovers ever knows.

But one day Harry came to town at noon and Jennie was not at the store. After much hesitation he found courage to inquire of the young man he found there about her, and he said she would not work there in the future.

He was greatly disappointed and thought of going to her house to see her, but on going to the postoffice, he found the following letter:

“DEAR HARRY:—

“Mother knows that I love you. She is very angry, and says I shall never speak to you again. It is so cruel of her to part us; but she is my mother and maybe I ought to obey her, but I cannot. I was looking at the lovely sunset last night from my window and

A Strange Flaw

thinking of you. It seemed as if God was very near, the heavens were so beautiful. I prayed to Him for you, dear Harry, and asked Him to guide us aright and tell me what to do, and He seemed to whisper to my soul the answer, 'Stand by your love whatever comes,' and I shall. You cannot meet me at the store as you used to in the happy past, nor come to the house to see me, but when the clear moonlight evenings come, I will meet you by the tall elm that grows by the lake shore at the end of the path where we have had so many happy times together. I often go down there and sit in the evening and look out on the peaceful lake and up to the quiet sky, and think of the joyous hours we have spent together and of the happy day when we shall part no more. I will meet you there, dear Harry, every evening that I can. Oh, I long to see you so.

"Goodbye, dear,

"YOUR JENNIE."

This little missive chilled Harry with disappointment. He had so longed and waited to go to town, and had counted every minute

A Strange Flaw

as it passed to bring the hour when he could see her, and now to find that he must wait for a clear, moonlight evening, which might not occur for a week, made him feel sore and sick at heart. Several afternoons after that he came to town expecting to see Jennie, but just after sunset it clouded up and rained and he had to go home disappointed in the wet and darkness.

Jennie also watched and waited for a clear, beautiful evening, and when the clouds would bank up and it would rain the very drops seemed to fall upon her heart.

At last, after a very wet day, along in the afternoon, the clouds cleared away and the air was cool and balmy. The moon was then almost full and Jennie was sitting on the back porch late in the afternoon, watching its pale face barely visible through the leafy trees, and thinking that Harry would surely be in that night, and she would meet him down by the lake, when her mother opened the door and said:

"Jennie, father has just been up and says that the president of some great railroad is in town and will be here to tea this evening. He is immensely wealthy, and father says he

A Strange Flaw

is not married. Go and dress up; I want you to look your prettiest when he comes. He might take a fancy to you; who knows? Then you would be ashamed of your foolish passion for that country gawk."

"Don't talk so, mother; Harry is a good boy. Everybody likes him.

"But he is such a cheap, low-bred article that I can't and won't endure him," remarked Mrs. Jinks. "To-night is your opportunity; Mr. Bragg is a great railroad king; think of it! Who knows but he might take a fancy to you! How everybody would envy us. Daughter, you must do your best."

"I shall treat him with civility. No honest maiden could do more, whatever she might wish."

"Honesty!" exclaimed Mrs. Jinks. "Why prate so much of honesty? You need not be dishonest or immodest. Be not too coy, nor seem too fond or yielding. Drink in his words as young birds swallow food, and make him think you deem them oracles. Ogle and sigh and stare with melting gaze. Speak with pursed lips and so recline that he may see your rounded bosom swell and sink and note the gentle outlines of your

A Strange Flaw

form. From this he will conclude your heart is his and that you glow with feverish passion, and thus his fertile fancy will set him wild. Such acts as these make poets rave, bring emperors to the feet of peasant girls and cause the gray philosopher to kneel and beg for love."

"I could not, even if I did not love another; but loving Harry so, I cannot even try," said Jennie, as she arose to leave the room.

When Jennie had entered her own room, she closed the door and sat down, feeling very sad. "Oh, what ugly luck is this," she said. "Why could not this man have come some other evening? I have watched and waited for a clear night to meet Harry, when I could get away without being noticed or suspected, and night after night have been disappointed 'til my heart is sore with waiting, and now, to-night, which will be the first bright, clear evening since I wrote to Harry, this man had to be invited here to supper, and I must stay and entertain him. Oh, how disappointed Harry will be; he'll wonder why I did not come, and maybe he will think I'm sick, or think that I have for-

A Strange Flaw

saken him and never come again! Oh, dear, dear, dear, my heart is breaking," and she burst into tears.

After crying a while she felt relieved, arose and dressed herself for tea. And when it was announced that Bragg had arrived she went down to see him. She did not feel like entertaining anyone; in fact, she hated him for coming up that evening. Such was the condition of affairs when Bragg arrived at the Jinks cottage, ostensibly to take tea with the family, but in reality to court Jennie Jinks in the interest of the Sound and Reliable Railroad scheme. It had been many a year since he had attempted to court the fair, except to ask for food or raiment, and his success then had not been of the best, for they usually slammed the door in his face or gave him scraps and crusts that were hardly fit to eat, with instructions to take them and go. He had studied how to speak with a smile and to beg in gentle tones, but no gentility can excuse poverty and rags. But now he was well dressed, and instead of appearing as a beggar, came as the president of a railroad company. When Mr. Jinks intro-

A Strange Flaw

duced Jennie he took her by the hand and said:

"Mr. Jinks, I have heard very much spoken in praise of the beauty of your daughter, but she surpasses my highest expectations. You will excuse me, Miss Jinks, for this very blunt compliment, but I was so astonished that I could not help it."

"I do not enjoy flattery, Mr. Bragg," said Jennie blushing.

"In that we agree," said Bragg, "for I despise it, too; but truth is not flattery. Besides, I could not flatter you; you are beyond my power to praise, much less to flatter."

Tea was soon ready and, while at the table, Bragg improved every opportunity to show courtesy to Jennie. He spoke so pleasantly of everything, and was so merry and happy in his demeanor, that his presence really produced an atmosphere of joyousness. Supper over they repaired to the parlor. When all were seated Bragg said:

"We have just enjoyed a physical feast; now let us feast our souls with melody. Miss Jinks, I have heard very much of your skill in music; will you not favor us with a song?" She hesitated and he continued: "Oh, please

A Strange Flaw

do; it will make me so happy." After stating that she could not sing, she took her place at the piano and sang in a very sweet, clear, melting and expressive voice, the song entitled, "Will You Love Me When I'm Old?" Bragg immediately threw himself into harmony with the tune and listened with rapt attention. She became deeper and deeper absorbed with the spirit of the piece as she proceeded, and when she had reached the chorus to the last verse her voice became low and sad, almost painfully sweet, and she seemed to pour her whole soul out in music with the words:

"Life's morn will soon be waning,
And its evening bells be tolled;
But my heart will know no sadness
If you'll love me when I'm old."

And when she ceased tears stood in Bragg's eyes, and he appeared to be very much moved. Wiping them, he said: "I know it seems very foolish in a man to weep, but I am not used to such music. Mr. Jinks, your daughter sings like an angel. I have heard all the great prima donnas, but I have never heard such melody before. It goes

A Strange Flaw

right to the heart and charms the soul with rapture. The sweet voice of your daughter is worth more than all the mines of Colorado. I know you love her, but I fear you do not realize what a treasure you possess. She should never know a care or sorrow, and never be permitted to mar her beauty or her voice by toil. She should have the best musical training that the world can afford. She has a grand future before her. But a few years hence, and the whole world will echo praises of her beauty and her *mélody*. I imagine now I sit in a royal theatre, wherein gallery rises above gallery, and box above box, until the sight is blurred by distance. I see every available space packed with an eager, admiring throng of youth and age, beauty and nobility. Every seat is lined with luxury; every wall is covered with loveliness. Its velvet stage is so surrounded with paintings, so hung with tapestry, so ornamented by art and perfumed by flowers, that in the mellow, crimson light shed by a thousand tinted jets, it seems to the ravished senses a paradise of glory. Amid this loveliness there stands this little maid who sang so sweetly now for me. Her graceful form I

A Strange Flaw

see, arrayed with softest, choicest silks and lace sprinkled with the richest diamonds. Her little velvet hands and arms are clasped with costliest jewelry. Her pretty raven curls are studded with roses and sparkle with precious gems; and round her neck, which rivals in hue and symmetry the water-lily, there hangs a blazing necklace, glittering like a tiara of stars; but fairer far than roses, silks or diamonds are her lustrous eyes, her ruby lips as she throws out her soul in heavenly melody. Her audience soars upon the wings of song to bliss. Princes become enraptured, bards chant praises to her name, and artists to paint her beauty vainly try. All the world profusely showers its love upon her. This is no dream, but a true sketch of what music and beauty have done for many and will do for her."

Bragg spoke with great earnestness and apparent sincerity. His words chimed so sweetly with the chords of pride and vanity which were strung so highly in the hearts of Mr. and Mrs. Jinks, that they were visibly affected, and Jennie's blushing face and tearful eyes told that ambition lurked within her breast.

A Strange Flaw

"What do you think of that, daughter?" interposed Mrs. Jinks, as Mr. Bragg had finished his words of praise. "I always told you that you had a sweet voice."

"Sweet singer, won't you sing again?" said Bragg, beseechingly. "Select some soft, sweet, sentimental song that calls up memories of other days, of moonlit mossy banks by rippling streams, enchanted groves, where June's first blossoms grow and fill the soft night air with sweetest perfume."

Jennie was anxious to meet Harry and was looking for an excuse to get away, so she replied: "I do not know such songs, and if I did I am too weary now to sing them. I beg leave to retire."

"Then, I'll excuse the song," said Bragg. "But do not leave me." The sound of many voices, swelling in a chorus of song, was wafted on the night breeze from a church near by. Bragg inquired the cause and was informed that the Methodists were holding a protracted meeting there. He asked if any of the Jinks family attended, and upon being informed that they often did, he said: "I am very fond indeed of the deep and holy joy which dwells in worshipping congrega-

A Strange Flaw

tions. It seems to fill my soul with new life. I should very much like to go over, Miss Jinks, if you will be so good and kind as to go with me. In the rapture of religious love we could very appropriately finish this very pleasant evening."

"I'd rather be excused," said Jennie.

"Why, daughter, the hour's not late," protested Mrs. Jinks. "Mr. Bragg, she is so diffident and unused to men. I fear that you must urge her."

"I would not for the mines of all the earth bring to that lily skin one rosy blush, were it the blush of shame, but blushing modesty becomes the maiden's face as crimson tints adorn the dawn of day. Miss Jinks, I cannot quite excuse you," said Bragg.

"Our daughter will not refuse our honored guest," said Mr. Jinks.

"She'll get her wraps and go. Excuse us for a moment," ejaculated Mrs. Jinks firmly. Thus commanded, Jennie was forced to retire with her mother to get ready, and in a few moments afterwards the delighted parents saw their daughter walking arm in arm with Mr. Bragg, chatting and smiling as if she had not known a care or sorrow. She

A Strange Flaw

told him of her secluded life, and how unaccustomed she was to have a gentleman accompany her to church. Bragg then said in a very low and tender tone: "Child, you know but little of the wickedness of this world. God forbid that your young heart shall ever see the vice and crime that I have seen, and the temptations I have undergone." This touched her deeply, for nothing tends more to make a woman love a man than to think that he has passed through terrible temptations and seen a great amount of vice and crime. She answered: "Mr. Bragg, the story of your life must indeed be a very sad and interesting one. I would like to listen to it from your own lips, that I might sympathize with you in all the trials and temptations through which you have passed."

Bragg replied: "To have the sympathy of such a sweet, pure-hearted girl, would more than recompense with joy for all the sufferings of the past. Some day I will relate it to you, dear child; you will then understand how grateful I feel to God for his fostering care."

When they reached the church the meeting had been opened and the fever of relig-

A Strange Flaw

ious excitement was high. A fat Scotch washerwoman, Mrs. Dewey, had just finished pounding out a prayer, which consisted principally in crying, "Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!" and clapping her hands while she stamped her feet. She was apparently insane with joy, and however ridiculous her conduct was, one could not help feeling happy in seeing her and wondering at the cause of so much bliss. When Bragg came in, Elder Goodman stepped down from the pulpit, went to him, and invited him to come and have a seat there, and suggested that Jennie take a place in the choir. Mr. Goodman then stated to the audience that they were fortunate in having with them a dear brother from the East, the Hon. Henderson Bragg, whom they would be glad to hear from. Speaking in church was very new to Bragg, but as Elder Goodman was one of the men Bronze had said it was very necessary to get to aid him, he determined not to refuse. His countenance assumed a very pious aspect as he arose and said:

"Dear brothers and sisters: I am very thankful of an opportunity to testify to the goodness and mercy of God. I was born

A Strange Flaw

and bred of godly parents, who taught me the way to salvation. Surrounded by wealth and luxury, I fell into the society of the ungodly, and might have died in sin, but for an accident that arrested my mad career. I was struck with a slung-shot and picked up for dead."

"Praise God," shouted some mischievous boy in the audience.

"I lay in a state of unconsciousness for three days. When I came to my senses, I found myself in a close coffin, buried in a grave. I cried frantically for help, and promised God, if he would save my life, I would serve him the rest of my days. It was in the dusk of the evening, and an old man, nearly blind, happened to lose his way home and wandered into the graveyard. He heard my cries for help proceeding out of the ground, and terrified with fear, approached the spot from whence the sounds proceeded. He had nothing to dig with, and I would have died of suffocation had he not accidentally stumbled over a spade which the sexton had forgotten to take home with him. The old man seized the spade and dug me up as soon as the feeble tremblingness of

A Strange Flaw

age would permit. Just as I had given up to die, he broke open the lid of my coffin and let in the pure air of heaven. So I was snatched from the very jaws of death by the mercy and goodness of the loving Father."

He was often interrupted by exclamations of "Praise God!" "Glory to God!" and the like, and was about to proceed to tell how pure and holy he had become since his burial, when Mrs. Dewey got the power and arose frantically with a shout, and threw her arms around his neck and gave him a hug more affectionate than agreeable. It took the combined force of the minister, Bragg and the usher to remove her; and when removed she raved with such maniacal frenzy that Bragg had to stop speaking when he least wanted to. While the audience sang "Hold the Fort," the minister and usher carried her out.

After the singing, Brother Simpkins jumped up and said:

"Brothers and sisters, we 'ear in the 'oly Scriptures that the flesh his weak. My 'art is 'evy. I must confess that I 'ave been a little too hintimate with Sister 'Igginbottom." "Praise God," shouted Brother Higginbot-

A Strange Flaw

tom, piously. Then Mrs. Simpkins, the confessor's wife, arose and, amid sobs and tears, said that her flesh was also weak, that she must confess that she had been a little too intimate with Brother Higginbottom. Mr. Simpkins was the only one that seemed surprised at this disclosure, and he was in bad shape to complain. Brother and Sister Higginbottom then made their confessions, and the minister and usher returned and the services continued as usual.

At the close of the service Bragg took Jennie home, feeding her religious nature, on the way, with stories of what God had done for him. They lingered long at the gate, and he told her that, in all his travels, he had never met a girl that seemed so very near to him as she. After bidding her good-night very tenderly he repaired to the hotel and she to bed—he to study over his railroad scheme, while she pondered and dreamed over and over again the events of the last few hours, and built bright palaces of expected joy to spring from her acquaintance with him. Had she forgotten Harry? No; the thoughts of him haunted her like a spectre. She asked herself, "Have I done

A Strange Flaw

wrong?" Ask yourself, gentle reader, had she?

Could any one so situated have done otherwise? Then, let us not condemn her. Let us, rather, condemn the criminal idiocy of her parents who forced her into this position.

After praying to God to guide her aright Jennie went to sleep. She dreamed she was talking to Bragg, his face wore such a sweet angelic smile as he told her how rich and happy he would make her, and what he would do for her father and mother. Then she thought he happened to turn his back, and then she beheld a horrid face which glared upon her with such a fiendish grin that she screamed and awoke. The dream troubled her so that she slept no more that night.

A Strange Flaw.

CHAPTER VII

JEALOUSY

Harry had longed and waited so many days for a clear moonlight evening and had come to Littletown so often only to be disappointed, that when he awoke in the morning on the day of which we have written, and found the sky clouded and a rain falling so gently and steadily as if it would continue forever, he felt very sad; but when, in the afternoon, he saw the clouds disappear before a cool and gentle breeze, the burden was lifted from him and hope shone again with the sun. He hurried to get his chores done early, dressed in his best and, with a light heart, went to town. And when the last rays of the setting sun had sparkled across the translucent waters of the silvery lake, Harry was at the appointed place, eagerly waiting for Jennie.

At first he waited with happy anticipation, but when she did not come he grew impa-

A Strange Flaw

tient; his anxiety became intense and painful. He listened for her footsteps until his brain ached and his senses swam, hoping she would come, but fearing she would not. At last he concluded she would not come. Then the keen tooth of disappointment began to gnaw at his breast. A thousand wiry devils were tugging at his heart strings, and he said:

"Oh, this waiting, waiting, 'til the heart is sick with disappointment! It seems for every moment's bliss I have an hour of pain. Why does she not come? Perhaps she is ill. She would come if she could. 'Tis not her fault. Let me be patient!"

So he waited until hope had died, and in his despair he slowly wended his way homeward. He could not bear the idea of going back without seeing her, so he loitered slowly by her home, and looked in at the windows as well as he could from the street. He did not see her. Just then he heard music at the church. They were singing the closing hymn. He thought, "Possibly she is there. I will go over and, if she is, will come home with her. I may see her, after all."

Then hope revived. He started for the church and arrived as they were having the

A Strange Flaw

benediction. He looked in at the door. There he saw her. Oh, how happy he was. But how fleeting his joy. He heard the audience dismissed; saw her take her fan and book; saw a finely dressed gentleman come up and speak to her with a smile; saw her return the smile; saw her proudly introduce him to her companions; saw her take his arm and go out with him; saw them walking towards her home together; heard her sweet voice ring out as they chatted in low accents; saw them linger at the gate; saw him bid her good-night and go. He walked a few steps, then sat down on the sidewalk and buried his face in his hands and said to himself:

"Oh, what a fool am I to give my heart to a girl to play with! How implicitly I loved and trusted her. Oh, God, I never dreamed of this. I builded all my hopes upon her heart and now am hopeless. Oh, how confidently I pinned my faith upon her promises to meet me by the lake. Where are they now? Perhaps she loves me yet, but then she will not love me long. I have a rival. He is rich, I am poor; he is educated, I am not; her parents like him, but hate me. My

A Strange Flaw

suit is lost. My heart is heavy. Oh, had I never met her. Before I loved, my heart was light; I knew no sorrow; and now I hardly have a peaceful hour. Oh, love, you are the road to grief. By smiles and promises of bliss you win the heart to torture it. I'll love no more. This flower of love which grew so fresh and fair has grown to be a briar with poison thorns. I'll root it from my heart. Oh, could I blot its memory out."

Thus he bubbled out in words the raging tumult in his breast, and by his resolution felt relieved and started home.

To those who enter love with all their souls, it is a dangerous sea, with shoals and whirlpools, eddies, hidden rocks and breakers wild, which chart or map can never give; nor pilot's skill avoid. Love and jealousy are twins. One fair as heaven, the other foul as hell. They live united, share each other's weakness and die at the same time. Who feels the joys of one must know the other's pangs. One plucks the fruit, the other guards the tree.

So Harry went home, resolving to bury his love, but he could not. The next day he studied the matter over, and finally, late in

A Strange Flaw

the afternoon, concluded, as it was fair, that he would go to Littletown again, and if he saw Jennie, perhaps she could explain it all to him. He would go once more. So, time having healed his wounds to some extent, we find Harry starting about sunset, on the same road he had trod the night before, but not with quite the same ardor.

When Jennie saw the sun set clear, that evening, she thought of her promise to Harry, and was determined to go down to the lake shore to meet him. The events of the last twenty-four hours had somewhat distracted her thoughts; and while Bragg and his words were almost constantly in her mind, yet she loved Harry, and was determined to remain true to him. So, as the evening advanced, and the moon came out bright and full, she got an opportunity to steal away, unobserved by her parents, and started. Silently, cautiously, she crept down the back yard, through the alley in the shadows of the trees. The rustle of a leaf startled her. Several times she became frightened by the barking of a neighbor's dog, or the sudden flight of a bird, and thought of returning, but still pressed on. Then she

A Strange Flaw

thought if Harry shouldn't be there, or what if some one should see them together, and mother should find it out. What would she do? But when the thought of the joy of meeting him came to her aid, her courage returned, and when she thought she saw him sitting under the old elm, waiting for her, every fibre of her being was wrought up with the most intense desire and her eyes sparkled with heavenly joy as she flew toward him to embrace him, when, to her great surprise, she saw it was Bragg. He had been out for an evening walk, and feeling a little tired, had sat down under the tree, and was just drinking in the loveliness of the surroundings, when he saw Jennie rush up to him. Jennie was very much agitated by her mistake, feeling her conduct had divulged her secret. Bragg saw her embarrassment and said:

"Good evening, Miss Jinks; you mistook me for another."

"Yes, I did," answered Jennie. "You look very much like father in the moonlight, but you must excuse me. I must go back."

"Allow me to return with you," said Bragg, offering her his arm. She took it

A. Strange Flaw

and they slowly walked up the lake shore. "Oh, am I not fortunate to meet you so soon again, and on this glorious eve?" said Bragg, as they proceeded.

"'Twas very unexpected on my part," said Jennie, "to find you underneath the elm, where I have spent so many happy hours, musing in solitude."

"I think you live in a world of memory and imagination, Miss Jinks, do you not?"

"Yes, Mr. Bragg, I love dearly to recall the past and imagine the future."

"In that we are alike," he said, "for my happiest hours are those I spend in memory, living o'er again a very happy past. And now, to-night, my heart o'erflows with joy. The beauteous heavens bend so benignly o'er us, and such a soft, dreamy light falls on this lovely lake, begirt with forest shores, as makes this peaceful spot of earth seem like a fairy land, or an enchanted realm; and you an angel by my side. On wings of love my mind flies back to other days when skies were soft and waters bright, and shores as green and fair as now. On such a night as this I sailed along the bay where Boston looks into the sea. Bathed in the moon's soft light the

A Strange Flaw

city slept, encased in ocean's slender arms, and silence reigned, where day had seen a busy mart; and peace reclined embowered where strife had clamored long and loud. Angels of joy, descending, seemed to sit and sing a song of peace on every spire and dome, column and minaret, which learning, love or liberty had raised within this Athens of the west. And from the east where ocean melted into sky, to where the western heavens embraced the sleeping city, no cloud obscured the azure vault, or shadow fell from the empyreal dome, but blessings softly flew to earth on wings of light, from moon and star and every part of heaven. My eyes in rapture viewed the tranquil scene, and my soul o'erflowed with gratitude to God, whose love had done so much for me. While dwelling thus on all this loveliness, I heard a low, sad moan, such as comes from a soul in dire distress and saw an object plunge from a wharf into the sea. I hastened hither in my boat and found, to my surprise, that a fair young girl had tried to take her life. As she arose for the last time, I caught and drew her from old ocean's grasp, half drowned and strangled with its briny wave. By hours of

A Strange Flaw

care and nursing she was brought to consciousness, and then I saw how sick at heart she was.

“ ‘I wish to die,’ said she, ‘for earth has naught for me but shame and hate. I loved a viper with an angel’s face, who led me on the path called pleasure, down to deepest pain. Betrayed, forsaken, in poverty and despair, I fell into those depths from which no woman e’er can rise. I have no honor, friends, kindred, home or any means to buy a scrap of food. Death only now will take me, and from his arms you cruelly have snatched me. Oh, let me die.’ ”

“I gazed upon her pale, wan face, so woe-begone and sad, and when I thought how helpless, destitute and poor she was, and I had power to bring her back to virtue, love and life, how glad I was that heaven had thrown her in my way. I knew I ran some risk of reputation, but cared not for that, for when the weak and friendless cry for aid, how sweet it is to be a man. I gave her care and food and hope, showed her the pathway back to right, found her a home among the good and pure, where now she lives in virtue, joy and love.”

A Strange Flaw

Jennie listened eagerly as Bragg related this fiction in which he was the savor of life and restorer of virtue, and much admired the man who was so very kind.

"You have a very sympathetic nature, Mr. Bragg," she said.

"I love to relieve the suffering and help those who need it," said he. "I think I owe a great debt of gratitude to the sick, afflicted and needy for the pleasure they give me in allowing me to aid them."

Thus Bragg talked on, in this sympathetic strain, which fitted so neatly with her tender heart, that she was deeply affected, for he seemed so noble and generous. They walked up the shore until they came to the road, which they took, and were soon at her father's gate, where they parted.

On his way to town Harry had lived over in memory the happy times he had spent with Jennie, and his hopes of seeing her increased as he neared the village. The night was such a lovely one, she would surely be there waiting for him, so he hurried on. When he reached the road leading to the lake he heard her voice ring out clear and sweet in the fresh night air. His heart leaped

A Strange Flaw

with joy; he bounded toward the spot, when to his dismay, he discovered that same gentleman with her, who, the night before, he had seen escort her home. It was a chilling sight to him to see them walking, arm in arm, and talking so pleasantly to each other. But Harry was not one to show his jealousy. He stepped into the bushes, unobserved by them, 'til they had passed and then started home, fully determined never to come to town again on such an errand. To himself, he said:

“Oh, how deeply I've waded into grief in search of joy. The blind mole that burrows in the earth has sense enough to see and shun a dangerous place, or go around a rock. I've struck a rock, now shall I go ahead or go around? I dearly love her. But what of that? Shall I, like the foolish fish, swallow the hook because I love the worm. Oh, can she, who looks so much like the truth, become so very false? What is there in a pair of rosy lips that I should throw away the world to get their smiles, which ripple like the lake with every wanton breeze? The world is wide. I'll leave this vain pursuit so fraught with pain, smother my foolish love

A Strange Flaw

and take a higher path. Life is too short to waste as woman's slave. I'll be a man. But what is that? To plow, sow, reap, eat, sleep and sweat and finally die and be forgot. Is this the sum of life? My poor old mother's crooked form, bent by the weight of anxious years, her wrinkled, weather-beaten face, show how necessity, want and toil have eaten flesh and marrow up. Shall I drudge through the weary years as she has done, and reap, like her, this crop of want and woe?"

Thus he meditated as he journeyed home. Hitherto he had often thought of leaving the farm. He had now caught a new hope. It swelled his breast and filled his mind with dreams. To follow the footsteps of the noted, good and great he fondly wished. The world was full of woe. Oppression crushed the weak. The rich robbed the poor. The pious were persecuted and the wicked worshipped. This was wrong. He would remedy it. He would rid the world of wrong. He would lighten the load of the toiler, stay the arm of the oppressor, palsy the hand of the robber, and produce a society which had neither princes nor paupers, millionaires nor beggars. He would do this.

A Strange Flaw

How? From ambition's halls the way seemed clear; he would study law. Foghorn of Littletown was his friend. He would enter his office, become a lawyer, win distinction, become powerful; use his talents for the benefit of humanity, reform the world, establish justice, abolish poverty, banish want, destroy disease, extinguish pain, and——

Here he was interrupted by receiving a sudden blow between the eyes. In his reverie he had unwittingly run against a hitching-post near the old homestead gate.

"Curse the luck," he exclaimed, as he rubbed his face and roared with pain. The beautiful palace of his ambition collapsed in an instant, and he stood on solid ground. Harry found his mother sitting on the porch talking with a neighbor about the crops and the cattle, paying little or no attention to the beautiful moonlight which streamed in through the latticed woodwork around it. He sat down near them. She soon noticed how quiet and thoughtful he was, and suspecting that something had occurred, inquired:

"What did you see in town, Harry?"

A Strange Flaw

"Nothing particular," he answered.

"How did you find Jennie?"

"All right," he replied.

"Do tell us what is the trouble. I never saw you so quiet before?"

"I have been thinking," said he, "of quitting the farm. I can't bear to think of drudging away my life here, as you have done. I want to be something more than a farmer."

"Pshaw!" retorted his mother. "I just thought that little frizzy-haired doll would take you away from us, for it is surely none but her that would put such a foolish notion into your head."

"Jennie has never said a word to me on the subject," replied Harry. "Only, I was thinking, when I came home, that perhaps I might study law and rise in the world as other men have."

"Don't be a fool, Harry," said she. "I have worked hard all my life and I have earned an honest living, and if you do as well as I have I shall be glad of it. I am getting old and I have looked to you for a support and to run the farm; if you were to leave me now you would make me feel very bad."

A Strange Flaw

"You need not fear but that I will take care of you," said Harry, "as long as you live, but I have concluded to try and make my living easier than by farming, and to be in a position where I can do more good to mankind. When I see the suffering and misery in the world, and how hard and cruel is the lot of the toiling millions, and how easy some men make a living and enjoy luxury at the expense of the toilers, my heart longs to do something to rescue the overworked and oppressed from those who plunder them. I must know something about the laws before I can tell how to improve them."

Thus the conversation continued, and in the end Mrs. Hawkins reluctantly consented to her son's beginning the study of law.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER VIII

A RAILROAD MEETING

We will now return to the railroad project. The next issue of the "*Fountain of Truth*" contained a long article on the proposed road, from which we extract the following:

"A RAILROAD OR RUIN—WHICH?"

"With wildest joy we inform our readers that the representative of a syndicate of colossal capitalists now honors our town with his presence. The design of the enormous aggregation of wealth and brains represented by him is to build a double track steel railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The feeble imagination of man cannot picture, nor his mind grasp, the far-reaching, widespread, deep-seated and innumerable advantages that would spring from this great commercial highway. Nature has made this land a seat for an empire. Its hills are filled with building stones, its groves abound in

A Strange Flaw

giant oaks, and through its verdant vales the purest water ever flows. A railroad, then, is all we need, and this once built the factories of the world would come to us, and bring vast multitudes with pockets crammed with wealth to make a mighty city."

The article argued that a railroad would increase the number of personal injuries and thus benefit the doctors, swell the amount of litigation and thus help the lawyers, and make every class happy in its turn. "With a railroad," said the article, "Littletown would be the center of the earth instead, as now, an ulcer on its surface." It warned the people that, unless encouraged, the syndicate might not decide upon Littletown, but select some other point, and calamities would then come upon their cherished village until it shrank to a desert waste. The article closed by announcing a meeting of the citizens of Littletown at the Court House, to take action in the matter. After it came out, anxious squads of men could be seen standing on the streets reading the "Fountain of Truth," and talking earnestly and excitedly with each other. The price of real estate

A Strange Flaw

rose enormously. Men who had advertised their property for sale, went out and took down their signs, and began searching for some to buy on credit. Nearly every man who had anything to mortgage, mortgaged it for money to pay part down on purchases. Timothy Bronze opened a real estate office and helped foreign corporations to unload during the boom. The Lyer Brothers owned a swamp of about one hundred acres, which they had received for writing a ten line editorial on the honesty of the "Swamp Land Swindle." During the excitement they sold this at a high price to the Baptist church for a graveyard. Elder Goodman was seen, and on the following Sunday he mentioned the railroad project favorably in his sermon. When the night came for the meeting, the whole town was ablaze with excitement. On that evening Bragg and Bronze, with the Lyer Brothers and Elder Goodman, went to the Court House together, and there they found a crowd gathered, anxiously waiting. A. Lyer was made president, and George Washington Lyer, Secretary. The President opened the meeting by calling on the Honorable Henderson Bragg to address it. Mr.

A Strange Flaw

Bragg arose and spoke in slow, measured tones as follows:

“Ladies and Gentlemen of Littletown: This is the happiest moment of my life. From the high apex of its eastern office, the affluent company which I represent has watched the growth of this, your beauteous town. (Applause.) Our company are patriots whose pious lives, high-fraught with holy works, a bounteous God has justly blessed with wealth beyond our greatest wish. Now, with the cup of affluence running over, they seek this pleasant land to see how they can benefit its good inhabitants. A railroad they would build across this continent. Along its track comforts will cluster. Its flying trains will scatter blessings far and wide. Words cannot tell the joys innumerable that will spring spontaneously from this great enterprise. God made this village for a mighty mart, and by the assistance of this great highway people will swarm and cluster here like bees around a honey-pot. Its boarded huts and cots of sod to palaces shall be transformed. Paupers will to merchant princes rise. On its sandy soil, where now the milk-weed withers in the sun, the marble palaces

A Strange Flaw

of its millionaires, with silver minarets and golden domes, shall mock the heavens with man's magnificence. All that, we freely give and only ask a little friendly aid from you. We ask your people only to subscribe for stock that they may share with us the golden showers of profits which this enterprise will yield. What say you, friends?"

"Never since the Son of God offered the Kingdom of Heaven for faith," ejaculated the Reverend Goodman, piously, "has there been such an offer as this. I'll tell the glad news to all my flock and have them toil as one to aid these noble men."

There was a moment's pause; then Mr. Jinks arose and said:

"Let's hear from Timothy Bronze, Esq."

There came from all quarters of the room the cry for Bronze: "Speech!" "Bronze!" "Timothy Bronze!"

Timothy Bronze then arose, and having adjusted the set of his coat, began to speak as follows:

"The magnanimous and unanimous clamor for Timothy Bronze paralyzes his tongue and clogs his gullet with globules of gratitude."

A Strange Flaw

"Hear! Hear!" ejaculated the Rev. Goodman.

"Meandering from my meagerness," continued Bronze, "let's mention the mighty object of this meeting. The womb of time is ripe. Destiny engraves the name of Little-town upon unscratchable granite as the metropolis of America. In my mind's eye, I see her pusillanimous basswood hovels transmogrify into gilded palaces as spontaneously as the crimson gilded mushroom springs from the rotten stump. Where is the Lamp of Aladdin that manufactures this miracle? Behold! I observe it now. I perceive it crawling like a huge caterpillar along the ridge pole of the horizon. I hear it puffing—puffing—snorting—snorting—and—— hic—hic——"

Here he broke down and commenced coughing vociferously. This was his custom when he struck a higher key than he could carry out.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. It is more blessed to give than receive," was the fervent response of Rev. Goodman.

G. W. Lyer then spoke:

"Wind is wind, but it won't build rail-

A Strange Flaw

roads. (Cheers.) This gas about the Lord is all right, but it won't run engines. (Cheers.) If you want a railroad lock your jaw and unlock your safe."

Mr. Bronze felt it his duty to make a few more remarks, so he arose again and said:

"When the cold pop ferments and fizzes in the bottle then the thirsty philosopher pulls the cork. When the fat clam has grown broad in the back, then the scientific clam catcher peels his shell; the wise bird does not wait for the worm to take wings, but gobbles him where he creeps and swallows him while he squirms. Procrastination is the parent of poverty. Then jerk while the bull-fish bites!"

Many other speeches were made, urging the people to take stock in the road, and the sentiment of the meeting seemed to be unanimous in favor of it, when Enoch Foghorn arose and said he desired to ask Mr. Bragg a question. Consent being given, he said:

"Please give us the addresses of the men who compose this company."

"Kind friend, that would weary us all, there are so large a number," Bragg replied.

A Strange Flaw

"I should say so!" ejaculated Mr. Jinks.

"That is a useless question," said Goodman.

"A most incompetent and immaterial interrogatory," suggested Bronze.

"It might weary you," said Foghorn, "but it wouldn't me. What and where is its property?"

"Foghorn, your obtrusiveness betokens imbecility," said Bronze.

"I am not now prepared, my dear Mr. Foghorn, to schedule its enormous assets," said Bragg. "That great labor would be too tedious."

"Brother Foghorn, do you doubt these honest men?" asked the Rev. Goodman.

"What do we care if we get our pay," said George W. Lyer.

"He offers to pay us in stock. If the company is worthless, of what value is its stock?" demanded Foghorn. "If it is 'sound and reliable,' why is it so anxious to dispose of its stock? The association of large and small capitalists is like the association of large and small fish. One class soon swallows the other. In the end your subscription will be a gift to a gang of men of whom you

A Strange Flaw

know nothing, and judging by their representative here, they may be the hardest lot on earth."

While he was speaking he was often interrupted by cat-calls, groans and hisses, and was called to order by Bronze and Goodman and others. He was at last compelled to desist by the determined sentiment of the meeting. When he had ceased, Rev. Goodman offered the following resolution, which was adopted almost unanimously by a rising vote:

"Resolved, That we deeply regret that one of our citizens should make such an unwarrantable and unjustifiable attack upon the character of the Honorable Henderson Bragg, whom we all regard with the greatest esteem."

Bragg voted against this resolution, and then arose and said:

"My dear friends, Foghorn is an honest man; so are you all. I love the brother who asks for proof. I will deluge him with it at the proper time. Now that we are all in harmony, I will call you all my brothers. Prosperity to bursting shall be yours. Dear Brother Goodman, your searching prayers

A Strange Flaw

shall bring us riches here on earth and peace hereafter."

Foghorn then arose and left the hall.

The subscription book was then opened and nearly everyone subscribed for all the stock he thought he could pay for, and a committee was appointed to solicit subscriptions through the adjoining country.

This committee was selected from the different sects, cliques, and clans in the community. Religion was represented by Rev. Goodman of the Methodist church. Infidelity by R. Gospel Windysoul, President of the Liberal League. Temperance, by Dr. Waters, the druggist, President of the Temperance Reform Club. The liquor interests, by Hans Dummeldeutche, who kept a saloon and brewery. The Irish, by Fagan O'Flaherty. The Secret Societies, by H. E. Q. Grip.

The next day after the meeting they met for consultation with Bronze and Bragg at Bronze's office.

They concluded to divide the work and each labor where he would be likely to do the most good. Bragg assured them that when the road was built its friends should

A Strange Flaw

not be forgotten; that in letting contracts the company would reserve the right to reject all bids, and those who might wish to contract for work on the road could be rewarded in that way.

Elder Goodman stated that he had already consulted with the leading men of his church and would see each member thereof personally and deliver a lecture at the church next week on the necessities and advantages of a railroad.

R. Gospel Windysoul said that he had seen the Vice-President and Secretary of the Liberal League and secured their support, and would canvass all the others and see all his friends, and if Brother Goodman lectured at the church next week, he would adjourn the League to meet there and make a few remarks on the subject, after Brother Goodman's lecture.

Dr. Waters stated that his whole heart was in the work, and that he would have the matter of taking stock brought up before the Temperance Reform Club at its next meeting, at which time he had made arrangements to have Mr. Bragg speak, and he would make it his special duty to see every

A Strange Flaw

member of the club and exhort them on the subject.

"Mein friends, Mr. Goodman and Mr. Vaters and Mr. Vindysoul speaks vell," said Mr. Dummeldeutche. "I vill close mein saloon and prewery both de dimes vend Broder Goodman speaks and ven the demperance club meets and have mein fellows all coom over, and when everybody speaks I speak, too. And every man vat comes to mein saloon I treats him and gets him to take some of dot stock."

The committee continued their deliberations until each member had expressed himself willing, and assured the others of his cooperation.

When they had laid out their work, and each had selected his field, they swarmed out of Timothy's office and scattered themselves throughout the community like bees from a hive, to return again and again, laden with the earnings of the people of the country.

Everything went on swimmingly with Bragg, until the evening came for him to speak before the Temperance Reform Club. To deliver a temperance address was a little new, but as he had prayed with the preachers

A Strange Flaw

and drank with the drinkers, he was confident that his assurance and dissembling looks would carry him through as a temperance apostle. Besides, he knew that the president and many of the influential members were not total abstainers, so he resolved to try. He would begin on the subject of temperance and tell the story of his life, how wicked he had been, of the crimes he had committed, and then he would tell how he had reformed; and gradually drift from that to the great railroad enterprise in which he was engaged.

The Littletown Temperance Reform Club was a collection of human wrecks, mental wrecks, moral wrecks, physical wrecks, and financial wrecks, all assembled there for the purpose of reviving for a little time their waning reputation and gilding, by self-praise in public, the defects of their private life. These were associated with, and controlled by, a few professional reformers.

On the evening of the meeting Bragg started to go to the hall. On the way he slipped into the back door of a saloon and drank a glass of beer. As he was going in he met the grim visage of Enoch Foghorn, who followed and watched him. When he

A Strange Flaw

had done drinking he started out, and met the president and secretary of the club coming in. They informed him that they had come there to attend a caucus to nominate township officers, that he should go directly to the hall and he would find a large audience waiting, and that they would be there immediately. It was a motley crowd. Rev. Goodman was there with his church; Hans Dummeldeutche with his saloon patrons. All classes, conditions and states of cleanliness and degrees of intelligence, races and nationalities were represented. President Waters, the druggist, soon came in and opened the meeting. Before introducing him he told Bragg he might talk to the club on any subject except politics or religion, that politics included the question of prohibition or license. His reason for this he stated to be that the last speaker was a fanatical prohibitionist, and went so far as to argue that the sale of all kinds of liquors should be prohibited by law, which, if done, would entirely destroy the drug business, "And," continued Dr. Waters, "there is no telling how far the extravagant idiot might have gone if Deacon Good-enough hadn't called him to order." With

A Strange Flaw

that explanation he introduced Mr. Bragg. Mr. Bragg began:

"I will tell you how I got to drinking. Years ago, when I was a young man, I was helping grade a railroad down among the Catskill Mountains. I shantied out down there in the wilderness with twenty others. Every one drank, lied, swore and played cards but me. I went to bed many a night and slept on straw between two drunken men, when I was the only sober person in the shanty. They would call me up nearly every hour in the night to get pepper tea and salt and water for them. Sometimes a whip-poor-will would perch himself on the corner of the shanty, in the middle of the night, and pipe his shrill notes, and the way those fellows would wake up and swear at him makes me shudder yet. One night the boys were having a terrible spree. Two of the most intoxicated, Frank Ruff and Bill Savage, were determined to fight. They staggered up to each other, clenched and fell of their own weight, each swearing the most fearful oaths that he would kill the other, but both were so drunk and weak that they could not kill a fly with their combined forces." (Tre-

A Strange Flaw

mendous applause.) "One day the boss came to me and told me that he was going to cut down my wages fifty cents a day. This startled me, as I had been doing on the average nearly twice as much work as the other men. I thought he reduced my wages because I did not do as the others did, so I went to drinking with the rest, and sure enough he raised my wages again." At this point some one in the audience shouted out: "Tell us where you learned to lie." This remark caused much commotion and the president severely reprimanded the party who made it. Mr. Bragg then continued to narrate a fictitious story of his life, telling of crimes he had committed while under the influence of liquor. He spoke of his setting fire to a blind asylum, of his cheating an idiot, and finally of his trying to rob a hard-shell Baptist contribution box of a missionary fund. During the time he was telling the audience how vicious he had been he was frequently interrupted by prolonged applause. He then intended to tell the audience how greatly he had reformed, and after he had done that to lay before them the great business he was at present engaged in. But before he had a

A Strange Flaw

chance to tell of his reformation he was interrupted by Enoch Foghorn, who arose and said he would like to ask Mr. Bragg a question. The looks of Foghorn worried Bragg. He would rather have been asked a question by any other man on earth.

"Did you take a drink of beer in the saloon before coming to the hall to-night?" asked Foghorn.

"What if I did?" said Bragg.

"Nothing," said Foghorn, "only you have told this audience what a bad man you have been. Everybody believes that to be true. Don't pretend you have reformed. I saw you drink there myself."

Bragg was about to reply when he was prevented by the most stupendous applause that the Littletown club ever knew. As soon as silence came again, Foghorn turned to Bragg with a look that made him wither, and pointing his long, bony finger at him said:

"How dare you masquerade in virtue's guise? The very name of Temperance is profaned, her power destroyed and influence blasted by the false harangues of all such men as you. Good and true men who are al-

A Strange Flaw

ways ready to help repentant sinners up the steep ascent to virtue are indisposed to mix with unrepentant knaves." At this point Elder Goodman arose and called Foghorn to order. Foghorn then left Bragg and turned on Goodman with increased fury, saying:

"Does the sword of truth pierce you, too, that you would interrupt it? You, who took an oath to preach your Master, Jesus Christ, then dragged your ministerial robes into the dirty pool of politics to lift a vile, despised, indicted sot into the chair of State, leading to his and your support the trusting weaklings of your flock, whose hopes of heaven hang on their pastor's words, and who little know how piety and hypocrisy can be mixed. Dare you talk temperance and virtue, you pious fraud?"

Goodman grew very red in the face while Foghorn was talking and when he had reached this point he started toward him and several of his parishioners followed. As they approached Foghorn stood as motionless and fearless as a stone statue. They strutted up to him and gave him a look of cowardly wrath and began brandishing their arms in a threatening attitude, when a big,

A Strange Flaw

strapping son of the soil arose, hitched up his breeches and swaggered toward them carelessly as he drolled out:

"Here, boys, fair play is the word. I don't propose to see a lot of you fellows pitching onto the old man. If I understand what he has been saying there's a darned sight of truth in it."

The prospect of a fight had a delirious effect upon the women present, and they all made a stampede for the door. Before they could be quieted they had so crowded each other that part of them were down on the floor and the others were crawling over them. The air was filled with their screams, shouts and groans, the cat-calls of the boys, and the admonitions of the officers not to get excited, that there would be no fighting. Seeing it would be useless to try to continue further with the meeting the president adjourned it, and did his best to raise the fallen and bind up the broken-boned. Mr. Bragg managed to work out of the jumble and get to his hotel, feeling very much discomfited at the result, and inwardly swearing he would never undertake to deliver a temperance address again.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER IX

THE INTERVIEW

The idea of studying for a lawyer hung by Harry constantly from its first conception. He mused on it by day and dreamed of it by night. It quickened his pulse, excited his nerves and almost buried, for the time, the passion which he had for Jennie. He was very anxious to begin, and in a few days after the night that he went to town with light heart and buoyant hope to meet the girl he loved, we find him treading the same road, no less delighted and anxious, but on a far different mission. He now seeks lore instead of love. When he returned that night he hugged an old calf-bound book to his breast with some of the feelings of rapture and triumph that he would have felt had he on his last journey found and returned with the girl he loved. Fantastic pictures of future greatness appeared to his imagination, and he hurried home eager to unravel the

A Strange Flaw

mysteries of the book which he looked at again and again as he glided rapidly over the ground. He had made arrangements with Mr. Foghorn by which he could study law under his direction, spending part of the time on the farm and part in the office. When Harry entered the house he found his mother's face radiant with glee. Harry's first thought was that she perceived his success and was overjoyed to see him return home with a law book under his arm. And as he came in he exclaimed exultantly:

"I made it, mother, I made it. I am going to study law under Mr. Foghorn and it will not cost me anything. I know you are glad!"

"Oh, nonsense," answered his mother. "Something has happened since you went away that puts the law business in the shade."

"What is that?" inquired Harry.

"A very rich man has been here," continued his mother. "He is from New York City, and is going to build a railroad through this county and I am going to own a part of it. I have been thinking of what you said about my always working so hard for a living, and I had a chance to buy an interest in the new railroad that they are going to build, and if

A Strange Flaw

you will let your crazy ideas of studying law go awhile and help me pay for the stock, we'll get rich in no time."

"For God's sake," exclaimed Harry in despair, "how much stock did you take, how much of the railroad did you buy?"

"I only bought \$500 worth," she answered, "but I can get some more, I think, if I see them right away. I'll go to town to-morrow and see, if you say so; besides, it's so very profitable, perhaps \$500 worth will make us as rich as we will need to be."

Foghorn had told Harry of the scheme of Bragg and his hirelings, and he was completely stupefied when he learned how his poor old mother had been duped by them. At last he recovered himself and said:

"Five hundred dollars is surely enough. The whole scheme is a swindle, so Mr. Foghorn says, and he knows. You have lost just \$500 in the matter; don't, for heaven's sake, take any more stock."

"Why, Harry," said Mrs. Hawkins, "how can you speak so discouragingly of my purchase? There is no swindle about it. Rev. Goodman was along and he says it is all right.

A Strange Flaw

He has taken a lot of stock himself, and he wouldn't lie about it. And there are the editors of the papers, they have taken three or four times as much as I have and they know what they are doing. So you see, Foghorn is wrong after all."

The plan had worked well. The most that Harry could do was to induce his mother not to take any more, and she promised finally that she would not. Harry went to bed that night with a heavy heart. He saw that he would have to work on the railroad to pay for the stock which his mother had unwittingly subscribed, in order to save the homestead; but he resolved to overcome all obstacles and not be deterred from his determination to study law, and when he once became a lawyer he would visit with vengeance the swindling railroad projectors.

Let us now return to Jennie. She had not, as yet, seen Harry since the beginning of her associations with Mr. Bragg; and had often gone to the lake shore and returned in disappointment. More than two long weeks had elapsed which had been full of incident. She had seen Bragg almost daily during that period, both on the street and at her home,

A Strange Flaw

which he visited very frequently. His politeness and kindness; his jolly and frolicsome disposition sometimes, and his sentimental and religious moods at other times; his sprightliness, vivacity and eloquence, boldness and tenderness, and above all the great power and wealth which she supposed he possessed, all combined to make a deep impression upon her. She could not help admiring him. There was such a contrast between him as he appeared to her, and the poor, uncultured, country lad whom she had promised to wed, that she could not fail to see it. She began to think that possibly she had been a little hasty in falling in love with Harry. Perhaps her mother was right after all. Could she be blamed for thoughts like these? Bragg was becoming more and more demonstrative in his affections, and it was easy to see that her beauty and intelligence had aroused at least his passions, and what he had begun in hypocrisy for policy was liable to end in seriousness. She felt that it was not right to receive his attentions while she was engaged to Harry. Possibly Bragg intended matrimony. If he did, how delightful to become the wife of a great railroad king of unbound-

A Strange Flaw

ed wealth. To live in a palatial mansion, dress in diamonds, and be surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries which wealth could bring. How proud and happy it would make her parents. The idea was entrancing. And then to marry Harry. The thought of being a farmer's wife, trudging in poverty through the winter's cold and the summer's heat, for the bare necessities of life, seemed cold about her heart. What a contrast. But she loved Harry and had promised to be his wife. What should she do? Such were the thoughts which agitated Jennie's mind as she took a book and strolled down to the lake shore. It was one of those drowsy summer afternoons when the mind loves to wander away from the busy scenes of life, out into the green fields and waving meadows, and we delight to lie down in some cool shade on the green grass beside a rippling brook and listen to the rustle of the leaves, or be lulled to sleep by the lazy hum of the insect world. Jennie reclined under a tree and tried to read, but her mind would wander away from her book to Harry and Mr. Bragg, and she finally laid it down and looked off on the beautiful lake and up into the blue sky. She sat and watched a

A Strange Flaw

little fleecy cloud as it slowly sailed unattended through the azure in the bright sunlight. While she watched, it grew smaller and fainter, until at last it dissolved away and the sky was cloudless. And she wondered if the little trouble that now clouded her existence would some day melt away and like it leave no trace behind. While thus musing she was startled by the approach of Harry Hawkins. He was taking a little walk by the lake shore without expecting to see her, and when he spied her sitting there he was reviewing his lessons, but his old love returned in an instant, and the past was all forgotten. He rushed toward her, expecting she would fly into his arms as she had often done. But when she coolly asked him to take a seat beside her, it rather dashed his ardor. Dumb with astonishment, he gazed on her until the tears came into his eyes. Jennie saw that her cold demeanor hurt him, but like many other girls, she rather liked to harass and humiliate her lover, as cats enjoy toying with a mouse after they have caught it, by biting it a little, letting it go, catching it and biting it again and again.

“Darling, how can you treat me so cold-

A Strange Flaw

ly?" said Harry. "It is now two long weeks since I saw you last, and I have been longing and waiting to see you that I might again feel your sweet kiss and fond embrace. Oh, darling, I live upon your love. It is my life, the inspiration of my existence. I cannot bear the thought of losing it, and that you should greet me so coldly now almost staggers me. Do tell me what has happened."

"I am not aware that anything special has occurred," replied Jennie with a somewhat indifferent air. "I see no use in being so very fond all the time."

"You never acted so coldly and indifferently before," said he. "At our last meeting we met and parted as lovers should, and the sweet remembrance of that has filled my heart with joy ever since. I know something has happened and I beseech you, if you have any love for me or any interest in my happiness, to tell me what it is."

"I have been wanting to see you several days to have a long talk with you," she replied. Here she spied her mother coming toward them a little way off, and she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, here comes mother. We will have to part. Where can I meet you again?"

A Strange Flaw

"Meet me to-morrow afternoon at Mr. Foghorn's office," said Harry.

To this she agreed, and by that time Mrs. Jinks had arrived. Elizabeth Stuart Jinks had a slim, lean countenance, and a thin, spare frame. Her high cheek bones were crowned by an irregular hectic flush. Her nose was slightly crooked, after the Roman pattern, and its nostrils and tip end were so full of red veins, that they looked as if they might snort fire at any moment. Her air and gait were lofty, and her whole manner indicated her great contempt for Harry, and her high displeasure in thus finding him with her daughter by the lake shore. She gave him a withering glance as she said:

"Harry Hawkins, what business have you snooping around after my daughter? Why don't you go after some other girl where you are wanted? Jennie is a lady, and for her to keep company with such a person is ridiculous."

This was too much for Harry. He had a proud spirit and felt the insult keenly. His lips trembled and his eyes darted fire at Mrs. Jinks, as he quickly replied:

"Jennie is a lady, and in that respect she

A Strange Flaw

does not in the least resemble her mother. If she took after you in any way, she would never be troubled by me."

"You may be sure she does," continued Madam Jinks, "for she is my child, and a part of my flesh and blood. Why don't you leave her alone and go and marry someone else?"

"Why didn't Mr. Jinks marry someone else?" asked Harry.

"I wish to the Lord he had," replied Mrs. Jinks, "for then I would have been saved this trouble. I would rather see my daughter laid in the grave than to have her become a member of your family. To think that my daughter should be so humiliated as to be obliged to recognize your mother as hers would kill me outright."

To hear his mother thus spoken of hurt him more than what she had said about himself, and he straightened up to his full height and looked down on her with a scornful and defiant glance as he retorted angrily:

"Madam, you can say what you please about me, but don't you have the audacity to slander my mother. I will not stand it. My mother is a good woman, and she has worked

A Strange Flaw

hard all her life to earn an honest living for herself and me, and I am proud of her, and I do not propose to stand and hear her abused by you or anyone else without resenting it."

"Why, Harry," interrupted Jennie, "how can you talk so to my mother?"

"Excuse me, Jennie," said Harry, cooling down a little. "In my anger I forgot that she is your mother. For your sake I retract what I have said, but she has treated me so shamefully that I can hardly believe that she is your mother."

"Jennie, come right home with me and let him go off about his business," said Mrs. Jinks as she took her daughter by the arm and led her away.

When Harry saw mother and daughter disappear in the path leading into the leafy woods, disappointment and wrath alternately raged within him. He stood in almost blank amazement for a few moments, until he could determine what to do. He asked himself, how could such a hyena be the mother of such a lamb? Why should such sweet fruit grow on such thorny briars? Strange freak of nature that a devil incarnate should give birth to such an angel.

A Strange Flaw

On the following day Jennie went to Foghorn's office to see Harry. While going she met Mr. Bragg. He stopped her and they talked on the sidewalk a few moments. She told him she was in a hurry, and somehow he was curious enough to take notice of where she went and wondered why she should go to Foghorn's office. Passing a little further on the street, soon afterwards, he met Mrs. Jinks. She had missed Jennie, and fearing she had gone somewhere to meet Harry, had started in pursuit. She inquired of Mr. Bragg if he had seen her, and he told her that he had seen Jennie go into Foghorn's office a few moments before. She had heard of Harry's entering Foghorn's office to study law, and took in the situation at a glance. She flew into a frenzy of passion, and vowed she would shoot Foghorn and Hawkins and send her daughter to a nunnery before the name of Jinks should be disgraced by a marriage with Hawkins. She started at once for Foghorn's office, sawing the air with her clenched fist as she proceeded.

When Jennie arrived at the office she found Mr. Foghorn alone, busy writing at his desk. Harry had not yet arrived. She was well

A Strange Flaw

acquainted with Foghorn, and upon more than one occasion had reason to look upon him as a friend. His straightforward, manly honesty and integrity of purpose caused her to excuse his somewhat rough and stern demeanor. So, after inquiring for Harry, she related to him an account of her relations with Harry, her parents' displeasure, her associations with Bragg and the wishes of her parents, and asked his advice. Foghorn hesitated, and then said:

"Has Harry given you a reason to break your promise to him?"

"None, except I fear that I would never be contented as his wife," she answered.

"Then, your question is, whether you ought to break your engagement with Harry and marry Bragg, if opportunity offers, because of his position and wealth and the desire of your parents," said Foghorn.

"That is it," she replied.

"My answer is, no," said he. "Suppose Bragg is rich; would you trade honor for dishonor, worth for wealth, purity for power, and then not get them? If Bragg is rich and powerful and you marry him, it does not follow that you will be rich and powerful, too.

A Strange Flaw

Your poverty will not be swallowed up by his splendor, your weakness will not be lost in his power, your insignificance will not be buried by his importance. When the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the high and the low live together they live in the relation of master and slave. As well enter the close confines of a Turkish harem and serve the beck and nod of a tyrant, or be a prince's mistress and creep to his caprice, as wed a man in wealth and power vastly your superior. If you must serve, 'tis better to serve a peasant than a prince. Your master's wrath will fall the heavier as you are weak and he is powerful. If you must be poor, 'tis better to be poor amid poverty than splendor. Poverty looks worse when near the blaze of wealth; that is, supposing Bragg to be rich, which is a dangerous supposition without seeing his title deeds."

At this point Harry came in, and with Jennie, retired to the consultation room. She then related to him, amid great professions of affection, the story of her associations with Bragg, and the overtures of her parents, and asked him what she should do. Harry listened patiently, and then said with much emo-

A Strange Flaw

tion: "Jennie, you know what I have to offer, the first love of a boy's heart, and all that I can do or be in the future for your happiness. You know Mr. Bragg and what he has to offer. I release you from the obligation of all the vows and promises you have made. Think over the matter when you are alone and uninfluenced by my presence; pray over it and choose between us. If you choose to link your life with mine, I will do my best to make you happy. If you conclude to go with Mr. Bragg I will never trouble you. Only be true with me, and though it tears my heart out, I will patiently abide by your decision."

Here he was interrupted by a terrible bluster, caused by the entrance of Madam Jinks. Madam Jinks advanced to Foghorn and shook her clenched fist in his face as she said:

"Oh, you lean, lank lizard. Where is my daughter? You've crept like a slimy snake into the bosom of my family to poison my domestic life. How dare you thus interfere with other people's business? If you ever poke your crab-faced visage into my affairs again, I will macerate and mangle it into mincemeat. If I had a man's strength I would now pound and pummel your dried

A Strange Flaw

carcass until it became as tender as new veal. Where is my daughter? I say."

Mr. Foghorn was writing when she came in. He merely looked up to see who it was, and then kept on writing, apparently paying no regard to what she was saying. After she had emptied the vials of her wrath, and began to get a little faint, he told her to take a seat, and as soon as he had finished the sentence he was writing, he would talk with her. When the sentence was done, he wiped his pen, laid it down, took off his spectacles, turned to her coolly and said:

"Madam, forty years ago, when I began the practice of the law, you were a mewling infant. Born in a country where the first principles of human liberty are unknown, and poisoned in your youth by the foolish fallacies of aristocratic robbers, I look with charity and pity upon your weak and pointless wrath. Knowing, as I do, how great and earnest a struggle it requires for the mind of a barbarian to breed even an absurdity, I cannot find fault with your erroneous conclusions. You have some energy, else you would not have made such a bluster. It will help you to get along with natural dullness. Study

A Strange Flaw

patiently the laws and constitution of our government, and the current literature of the day, and you will overcome, in a measure, your natural stupidity and the influence of the falsehoods taught you in your youth."

"My daughter marry a gawkey, a gump!" ejaculated Mrs. Jinks.

"It is useless," continued Foghorn, "for me to spend my time in talking to you in the present feeble condition of your intellect. Study until you learn the alphabet, and I will then teach you the words. I want it understood that I care not for what you have said, but I must request you to leave my office, and not take up my time further."

Madam Jinks was mad and frantic, but the cool, unruffled manner of Foghorn cowed her. After demanding her daughter again, and making a few threats, she left. Harry and Jennie then came out of the consultation room, and she went home, agreeing to ponder and pray over the matter, and decide what she should do, and let him know the result.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER X

THE PROPOSAL

Meanwhile the canvass for stockholders for the new railroad went busily on. The stock was considered very valuable, because everybody had it, which was a much better reason to consider it worthless. After every man in the county had pledged himself to take all the stock he could pay for, and a much larger amount was raised than necessary to grade, bridge and tie the road, Bronze went to Bragg and said:

"Now we are ready to start the tax proposition. We have done all we can to get the property owners to help us, and we have succeeded well. We have squeezed, fleeced and skinned them by persuasion, and now we must take their kidney lard by compulsion. Those who have no property are anxious to have a railroad, so that they can get work on it, but are unable to take stock. They will be perfectly willing to vote a tax on the taxpayers.

A Strange Flaw

I have had a surveyor estimate that it will cost much more to grade the road than the stock taken, and now we must go to the people through the newspapers, the pulpit, and the rostrum, and tell them that something should be done to raise the required amount, or the project will be abandoned, and they will rather vote a five per cent tax than let it stop."

"I am afraid that we have exhausted the people already," said Bragg.

"Oh, no," replied Bronze, "there is no bottom to the gullibility of the people."

Bronze was right. The tax question was agitated successfully. The Lyer Bros. advocated it in the "*Fountain of Truth*." Rev. Goodman prayed and preached for it in the pulpit, and all the committee, who had so far worked to procure stock subscription, worked in their particular spheres for the tax, and the result was an overwhelming majority for it. And so, a five per cent tax was levied on the taxable property. Old men, bent and decrepit by a' career of toil, in life's dreary winter, widows surrounded by orphan children crying for food, washerwomen in rags, wasted, worn to skin and bone, with despair-

A Strange Flaw

ing and drooping hearts, ready to die, lunatics in the asylums, infants in their cradles, the lame, the halt, the blind, the unfortunate, wherever industry, economy or charity had husbanded a cent to provide for a day of misfortune, all had to contribute to this railroad building fund. It would be difficult to tell of the enthusiasm with which this tax was voted. It would be hard to relate, and distressing to read, of the groans of anguish and despairing cries of the unfortunate poor, and the oaths and curses of the infuriated rich when the tax was collected and paid. When the road came to be surveyed and located, the Hawkins family met with an additional grief. It was decided that the road should run through the old homestead up the pleasant valley, on the south side of the creek, in such a manner as to make it necessary to tear down the dwelling, cut down the trees that adorned the beautiful grass plot around it, and utterly annihilate its beauty and desirability as a home.

When Timothy Bronze came out one day and told Mrs. Hawkins that they would have to run the railroad right through where her residence then stood she told him that no rail-

A Strange Flaw

road should run through there while she lived. And when Mr. Bronze said that she would have to sell to the company at their figures, or they would have it appraised and condemned, she took an ax and invited Timothy to leave the premises, which he accordingly did. The next person who appeared was the sheriff, with a jury made to order, from Littleton, who were all either directly or indirectly interested in the projected road, and they assessed the damage at \$200, and the amount was applied in part payment on the stock subscribed by Mrs. Hawkins. A construction company was then organized, in which Timothy Bronze, Rev. Goodman, Hans Dummeldeutche, H. E. Q. Grip, R. Gospel Windysoul, Dr. Waters, the Lyer Bros., and others who had aided in raising the stock, were prominent members, and the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company, through Henderson Bragg, contracted with them to build the road at such figures as would amply pay them, not only for the work, but for what they had done to assist the enterprise. These men divided up the job and let it to sub-contractors who were irresponsible, and who took the contract at a low rate, ex-

A Strange Flaw

pecting not to pay their workmen where they could possibly avoid it, or pay them with orders on merchants, and then cheat the merchants out of their pay. The extent to which this was done was amazing. When Bragg and Bronze had got everything in good working order in Littletown they went to other towns and counties and worked up the people, and carried out the scheme in substantially the same manner as in Littletown. Some little aggravation arose in the matter of the location of the depot. Timothy Bronze owned forty acres of land about three-quarters of a mile from Littletown, and he induced the company to put its depot on his forty, by giving them a handsome slice of it. This diverted the benefits of the railroad to that forty, and, in the future, caused the principal business places to move down onto that tract, and the place where Littletown originally stood was reduced back to agricultural land, thereby rewarding the property holders for their aid in constructing the road. The work of building the railroad finally began in earnest and went briskly on. Some of the stockholders turned their lean backs to the blazing sun and worked on through the long, hot sum-

A Strange Flaw

mer days, grading to pay for their stock; others sold or mortgaged their property, and many did both.

Harry Hawkins left his studies, neglected the farm, and part of the time handled a scraper with a team, and part of the time shoveled gravel, to save the homestead from being sold at a sacrifice to pay for the stock his mother had unwittingly subscribed. Along in the hazy autumn the grading was finished, the bridges were built and the ties were cut and laid ready for the iron.

We will now return to Jennie. Since the interview in Foghorn's office, she had often met both Mr. Bragg and Harry. Bragg showed her great attention on all occasions, and gave many indications of love, and Harry showed on his face unmistakable signs of the pain she was giving him by her indecision, but she still remained undecided. Bragg had not yet proposed, and it looked as if he did not intend to, but was only flirting with her, hence she did not feel like giving up Harry altogether, but chose rather to keep him on the ragged edge between hope and despair, and await further developments. This was cruel to Harry, but circumstances

A Strange Flaw

seemed to force it upon her. But when the Autumn came and business began to relax in railroad building, one beautiful afternoon in October, Mr. Bragg drove up with a carriage and invited her to go for a ride. She gladly accepted the invitation, and before she started her mother, who had also become a little tired of Bragg's reticence, admonished her to make him commit himself if possible. It was a lovely day, and just warm enough to be pleasant. The broad sun beamed through a light haze, like an immense ball of glittering gold. Its yellow light fell upon a mild and beautiful scene. The green mantle of the earth had changed to purple and gold, the fair foliage blossomed out in its gayest attire, and the landscape looked one immense garden of the loveliest of flowers. As they rode together through the yellow woods they seemed surrounded by a perfect paradise of dying glory. Bragg had fed so long upon the fresh air and the wholesome food of the west that this mellow Autumn filled his soul with a dreamy and fond desire. Nor was Jennie insensible to the charms of the occasion. While they were riding he said:

"How softly the Autumn sunlight kisses the

A Strange Flaw

golden maples, and streams among the leaflets. How bright and beautiful are the death robes of the forest. Yet, from its gay colors there reflects to my heart a sweet sadness. Each falling leaflet, in its little circles downward, admonishes us of the brevity of life, and there breathes a whisper from out the depths of the forest warning us to cling closer to each other, for time is fleeting and friends must part. Draw near me, darling," he said, as his arm gently encircled her waist, "while I tell you how intensely happy I am to be with you again. For many years my soul, like a little dove, has been searching the earth, longing and yearning for a mate, some dear, sweet friend like you. Dearest, where have you been all these long years that I could not find you before? 'Twas a blessed time that saw us meet. 'Twill be a day most sad when we must part. But all must part. The little leaflets, parted from the bough that gave them birth, lie scattered on the ground. See yon proud oak whose strength defies the storm. Where lies the acorn that did breed that oak, and where the oak that acorn bore? Gone with the mist of vanished shadows. The past is gone, the future may not come, to-day is

A Strange Flaw

ours. Then, darling, let me kiss your blooming lips before a frost shall come and make them pale."

Closely he folded her in his arms and kissed her. She slightly resisted.

"I do not like to think of parting," she said.

"No, darling, I can not leave you thus," he replied. "The Winter's cold of this inclement clime might chill my pet and steal her loveliness. I'll take thee to some perfumed isle that basks in sunlight, in a southern sea, where Summer blooms eternal, and flowerets never die, and sorrows never come. We'll build our palace in an orange grove close to the shimmering sea, where sweet-voiced birds may come and sing their songs of love. There where the sea breeze wooes the flowery isle and scatters odors far and near, we'll dwell embraced in bliss. And when the matin birds shall greet the dawn and the red sun rolls above the wave we'll rise refreshed from soft and peaceful sleep, and, arm in arm, stroll forth and drink the morning's fragrant breath, to get a relish for our morning feast. We'll dine on choicest viands, and through the long, bright days, we'll sit embowered in

A Strange Flaw

shade, and hear the waters murmur, and watch the sunlight dance upon the crested waves. There, far from the cold of northern climes, remote from strife and toil, we'll read and talk of love and days when love was born, from morn till dewy eve. And often, when the moonlight makes a silver sea, our songs of joy shall climb to heaven upon the perfumed air. We then will have no further thought of pain save that it's past. No wish that is not fully gratified. Oh, darling, will you be my little wife?"

"I can not tell you now, but I will pray over it, and talk to father and mother, and let you know some day," she said.

"Oh, let me know my fate to-morrow," he replied.

"Perhaps to-morrow," she said.

And thus they chatted on till the afternoon had fled, and in the dusk of evening they returned. Shortly after tea that evening, Jennie retired to her room to think over the events of the day, and decide what to do. It was no easy task. She could not bear the thought of leaving Harry and giving up all the hopes she had cherished of happiness with him, but her parents' opposition, his poverty,

A Strange Flaw

her helplessness, all made the way look dark and drear. 'Twas a lovely sight to see her there struggling with this, the greatest question of a girl's life, her fair, white forehead bowed upon her hands, her glossy curls hanging around her shapely head and neck, and her loosely fitting dress half revealing her graceful form. "What shall I do?" she asked herself, again and again. And seizing a pencil wrote :

Two sighing lovers seek my hand,
One offers me a palace grand,
Enshrined within a fairy land;
And one an humble cot,
Where poverty and want and care
And toil and solitude prepare
For all who choose to enter there,
A very dreary lot.
Which shall I choose
And which refuse?

Two paths appear before mine eyes,
One leads where flowers of heavenly dyes
Look meekly up to smiling skies.
And perfumes fill the air;
And one where want and hunger wait

A Strange Flaw

To greet the traveler at the gate,
'Mid highlands bleak and desolate,
And hedges brown and bare.
Which shall I choose
And which refuse?

Two winged vessels catch the breeze,
One soon will sail o'er balmy seas
To blessed isles where joy and ease
With love and beauty dwell;
The other to a frozen zone,
Where icebergs creak and breakers moan
'Gainst barren shores of jagged stone,
A horrid funeral knell.
Which shall I choose
And which refuse?

While she was thus engaged her mother
appeared and said:

"Daughter, did Mr. Bragg propose to-day?"

"Yes, mother."

"Did you accept him?"

"No, mother, I did not. I told him I
would give him my answer to-morrow."

"My child, you should be very happy.
Just think of your marrying such a fine, rich

A Strange Flaw

gentleman as Mr. Bragg. How jealous all the girls will be, and everyone in Littletown will envy you. You should be thankful to me for keeping you from throwing yourself away upon that Hawkins. You now see how foolish you were."

"But, mother, I love Harry."

"Love! Nonsense. You might as well fall in love with an iceberg and freeze in its embrace, as to fall in love with a beggar and starve. Make sure of your own happiness for life, and the ease and comfort of your parents, who have watched over and loved you as their only daughter for so many years. How proud and happy you will make us both by becoming the wife of the great railroad magnate. The idea! Think how the account will read in the great daily papers, of the gorgeous wedding of the Hon. Henderson Bragg, President of the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company, and Miss Jennie Jinks, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of Oliver Cromwell and Elizabeth Stuart Jinks, of Littletown. And then the wedding tour. Why, child, it almost sets me wild to think of it. I so long for the happy day. You

A Strange Flaw

surely will accept him to please your father and mother."

"Yes, mother, I will," she said.

She had been pressed beyond endurance. All the reasons and inducements seemed to be on one side, but her heart still shuddered to think of giving up Harry. She could not tell him of her decision. The next morning when Bragg came, she gave him her answer. He appeared to be very much affected by it. But when she spoke of the arrangements for their marriage he, realizing that she was in love with another and was being forced into this step by her parents on account of his supposed wealth, concluded to put the matter off as long as possible, and so putting his arm around her, softly said:

"Darling, I have a great secret which, now that you are going to be my wife, I will reveal to you. A few years ago a very beautiful Spanish heiress fell desperately in love with me, and was determined that I should marry her. I did not love her, and so refused. She followed me day and night and her presence hung like a black cloud over my existence. At last, one day, she drugged my coffee so as to make me insensible, and while

A Strange Flaw

in that condition she paid a justice of the peace to reel me through a marriage ceremony. Of course, when I came to my senses, I refused to recognize her as my wife, and immediately brought a suit to annul the marriage. That suit came up in court the other day and she, failing to appear, was declared in default, and the case is waiting for me to come and testify to the facts, in order to get the decree. When the decree is entered I will return for you."

Her credulity devoured this yarn, and thus they parted. Did Bragg intend to return and marry Jennie? That is another question. So far he had proceeded only for the purpose of aiding in Duncan's scheme. He saw her guileful parents had framed a net to catch and fleece him of his imaginary wealth, using this girl as their decoy, and there seemed no better way than the one adopted to hold their allegiance until such a time as he could do without the influence of Oliver Cromwell Jinks. If, when she knew the real facts, she should wish to marry him, he doubtless would gladly fulfil his promise.

The road-bed was now built and the first half of the scheme consummated. It was now

A Strange Flaw

necessary that Bragg should leave and Duncan should appear to engineer the remainder. The people were chagrined at the stoppage of the work on the railroad, but Bragg allayed their discontent by stating that the iron was coming from England, and fearful storms had delayed it. On the morning of Bragg's departure a large crowd gathered at the hotel. Harry Hawkins was among them, and when he saw Bragg get into the stage and the horses trot away, he felt a great relief. The plague that had so long galled him had gone, and he hoped for the return of the happy days spent with Jennie before Bragg had come. Shortly after that he saw her on the street and went to her. When she saw him she was much flurried, and told him she was in a great hurry. He asked her to set a time and place when he could see her. This she declined to do, wishing to avoid the embarrassment which it would give her to tell him that she had engaged herself to another. But her parents were not long in making the fact public, and the crushing news so shocked Harry that, for a time, it was feared he would lose his reason. But Bragg had gone, and,

A Strange Flaw

if Foghorn's suspicions were true, he might never return, so the young lover still hoped that something might occur to relieve him of his successful rival.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER XI

THE LEGISLATURE

As soon as Bragg arrived in New York, he hurried to the office of John Duncan to make a report of his doings. There he found him alone in his room in deep study on a canal project. He was contriving to get the United States to build a canal and give it to him. Before him, on a table, he had a map of the United States, a biographical sketch of each member of Congress, and of those who were supposed to own or influence them. He had also the laws punishing and defining bribery, and the decision of courts interpreting those laws; also a list of the newspapers in the United States and of the dates of holding congressional conventions and senatorial elections. After Bragg had told him of his success in the west, Duncan said:

"The time has then come for the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company to fail. I have the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad

A Strange Flaw

Company already organized and the mortgage ready to sign on the road, as far as built."

"We must go on with the work immediately," replied Bragg, "or the people will lose confidence in me."

"Just what we want, exactly," said Duncan. "Let them lose confidence in you, you need not go out again. I will go there and convince them that you are the worst rascal unhung."

"That will not be difficult to do," answered Bragg.

"In that way I can convince them that the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company is insolvent and has been obliged to mortgage the road-bed to put on the engines and iron, and I can then get the land grant from the legislature and sell sufficient to finish the road."

"There is an old lawyer out there in Little-town, by the name of Foghorn; you want to avoid him. He gave me lots of trouble and he may you," said Bragg.

Thus the conversation continued. A mortgage was signed by the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company, mortgaging the road built to the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Rail-

A Strange Flaw

road Company, to secure five million dollars, to be expended by the last named company in putting on the iron, rolling stock and equipments necessary to get the line in operation. The next day Duncan started for Littletown.

To secure such a public sentiment as would give him a land grant he concluded to arouse the energies of the friends of the road. From what he had heard of Foghorn he concluded that he might be converted into an important tool, so called at his office at once and found him at his desk. Hawkins was also in the room.

"Are you Mr. Foghorn?" inquired Duncan.

"I am," he answered.

"I wish to consult you relative to a mortgage that I hold," continued Duncan, as he placed twenty-five dollars on Foghorn's desk.

"Some time ago a worthless adventurer came out here and induced the people to grade, bridge and tie a railroad and take their pay in stock. His name is Bragg. The company he represented is insolvent, and was never anything but a paper concern."

"That's just what I told the people," said Foghorn.

A Strange Flaw

"The Sound and Reliable Railroad Company have mortgaged the road to the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, of which I am president, and I wish to know if I need record the mortgage in every county in which the road runs," further inquired Duncan.

"In every county," said Foghorn, "but where is this Bragg now?"

"Oh, he is in some of the slums of New York City," said Duncan. "He is an unprincipled scoundrel."

"Would you have any objection to my disclosing these facts to the people?" asked Foghorn, who felt much elated to find one who knew Bragg and could corroborate the opinion he had held.

"None whatever," said Duncan.

At length, in their conversation, Duncan grew more familiar. Foghorn related the story of Bragg's conduct. Duncan listened attentively, frequently denounced Bragg as a villain, and agreed to help in bringing him to justice. Both parties concluded that the confidence of the people in Bragg should be destroyed before that could be done. To accomplish this the story was industriously cir-

A Strange Flaw

culated that Bragg was an impostor; the company he represented a fraud; that it had become insolvent, mortgaged the road to another company, and it was doubtful whether the road would ever be completed.

The people along the line had spent so much labor and money in constructing it that they were poorly prepared to meet the cold winter which was now upon them. Many farmers, carried away by the craze, had so neglected their farms to work out the stock taken by them, that they had raised nothing to sell, and but little to eat. Everything was scarce, except railroad stock, and that was as plenty as Autumn leaves. In these hard times many who had spent large sums of money to buy property when it was on the rise, having exhausted their means and credit, were forced by necessity to sell, and as but few had money to buy, property that had risen so rapidly in the Spring, in the Winter was almost worthless. The scarcity of money had paralyzed business; laboring men were without money or employment, and the merchants who had sold goods on the orders of worthless sub-contractors were nearly bankrupt. These sub-contractors had drawn their pay, repu-

A Strange Flaw

diated their orders and left the country. The failure to complete the road had already caused great dissatisfaction, and now that it was circulated that Bragg was an impostor and cheat, and that the road would not be completed, Bronze and Goodman and the Lyer. Bros. and their associates smelled terror in the air. Men spoke in whispers on the streets. There were secret meetings, threats of lynching, and Bragg and his pals were spoken of in very unenviable terms. Something must be done immediately to stay popular discontent. The "*Fountain of Truth*" did its best to convince the people that Bragg would return and the road would be completed, and in the meantime Duncan was privately consulted by Bronze, Goodman and Bragg's other associates. They begged of him to do no more to break down the confidence in Bragg, and plead with him to go ahead and finish the road with all possible speed. Duncan told them that Bragg had grossly misrepresented the condition of the country and the road; and the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company had been induced by these misrepresentations to contract for the completion of the road, and take a

A Strange Flaw

mortgage to secure it, but now they would rescind the contract, unless some inducements were offered by the people, and upon being informed that the people had already been bled until they could bleed no longer, he suggested that the legislature be induced to make a land grant to aid in completing the road. They readily agreed to this, and promised to do their utmost to secure one. The labors of the Lyer Bros. and Timothy Bronze in behalf of the railroad enterprise had made them intensely popular during the Summer, and at the Fall election Bronze had been elected to the State Senate and G. W. Lyer to the House of Representatives. In many other localities, friends of the road had also been elected. When the legislature met at Bigburg that Winter, Duncan was on hand with his plans.

The legislature of that State was composed of members of two political parties. These parties we will call the "Good Party" and the "Anti-Bad Party." The platform of the "Good Party" contained two planks; the first was an announcement in glowing terms that it was proud of its great honesty and grand achievements. The second plank was a warning to mankind that the "Anti-

A Strange Flaw

Bad Party" was sharpening its teeth and preparing to tear in tatters the fabric of government, and drive liberty and prosperity from the earth.

The platform of the "Anti-Bad Party" also contained two planks. The first stated that the so-called "Good Party" had invented and patented the art of stealing, had grafted disease and famine on the soil, and was about to install Satan the absolute monarch of the nation. The second plank of the "Anti-Bad Party" stated that it had long been an asylum for virtue, and was now the only harbor where the wrecked and shattered "Ship of State" might be repainted and repaired.

These great parties had been in existence many years, and each had at various times held supremacy in the State, but no great changes had appeared in the legislation. The membership of these parties changed greatly every year; many of their members died; many new ones came from boys arriving at majority, and from emigration; and many each year changed from one party to the other; and yet the platforms of these two parties were never without the two planks referred to, of laudation for self and calumny

A Strange Flaw

for each other, and the people never discovered the cheat, but were lashed into fury at each successive election, in behalf of one or the other of these parties.

When the legislature met, the principal topic of discussion was the character of these two parties. Each had its champions, who spent most of their time in delivering calumnies. Fortunately for Duncan the only lands which the State was conscious of owning, were a few thousand acres of swamp and overflowed lands in the northwest part, of no great value. Knowing this, he hit upon the plan of framing a bill granting to the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company all lands now owned by the State, granted to it by the United States, for the purpose of internal improvement. This grant would enable him to set up title to all the lands along the line of the railroad, under the flaw discovered by Bragg at Washington. When this bill came up for passage in the Senate, the minds of the legislators were frenzied over the great political differences existing between the two parties. Prior to that the Hon. Horatio Hoggshanks, from Swillville, had introduced a bill to banish moles. This was vigorously

A Strange Flaw

opposed by the champions of the "Anti-Bad Party." They claimed that it was a bill wholly in the interest of the "Good Party," for that moles burrowed generally in sandy soil, and the "Good Party" were composed principally of ignorant foreigners who settled on sandy soil. The debate rose high and bitter, whereupon the matter was partially compromised by amending the bill so as to banish gophers also, which burrow in muck soil. While this fever was raging, Mr. Bronze asked permission to put through a mere formal matter, and the "Land Grant" bill passed without attention or opposition.

From the Senate the bill went to the House, and there it was referred to the Committee on Public Lands. The Hon. Augustus Alcott, one of the leaders of the House, was a member of this committee. He was a broad, square-shouldered man, with blue eyes, red hair and long red whiskers. He was about forty-five years of age and the father of eleven children. He had been unfortunate in his family affairs. His first wife, a short, plump, little blonde, died with dyspepsia; the second, a tall, slim brunette, sank into her grave with consumption, and his third, a

A Strange Flaw

stout, fat Swede girl, was an inmate of the asylum, having become a lunatic on account of great bodily weakness and nervous prostration. Yet, notwithstanding this grief, Mr. Alcott held his head up and possessed great vigor. When not engaged in the affairs of State he occupied his time as a retail dealer in blooded stallions, and as Professor of Ethics in the Girls' Reform School. The clerk of this committee was a petite, sprightly lady, named Mary Sweet, whose gentle smile relieved to some extent the dull, monotonous life of the committee man. Being of a sympathetic nature she could not but pity Mr. Alcott on account of his hard domestic fate, and in thinking of her, he often reversed her name, and there is no telling to what serene heights of bliss this mutual sympathy might have led, but for another feature.

The Hon. Ham Lamb was also a member of this committee. He was short and slender. He had large, expressive black eyes. His head was small and round, with a large bald spot extending from the forehead to the crown, fringed on either side with clusters of jetty curls. When he spoke it was in an exceedingly pompous manner. When not di-

A Strange Flaw

recting the machinery of government he spent his time cultivating flowers in his hot-house, and raising canary birds. He also had been unfortunate. While walking alone one day, watching an eclipse, he slipped on a cherry stone and broke his right leg, and in order to save his life the surgeon had to amputate it, so the Hon. Ham Lamb was compelled to get about the best he could on a cork limb. Although forty years of age he was still a bachelor. He had always been a great favorite with the ladies, and many a time had rumor told of his approaching marriage; but his esthetic nature never found its true affinity. He also had a warm feeling for Mary Sweet, and also reversed her name, and he and the Hon. Augustus Alcott had learned to look upon each other as rivals in that regard where no man loves his rival. And when these statesmen met in the presence of Mary, Lamb would ask Alcott how his wife was getting along at the asylum, and Alcott would ask Lamb if the weather affected his cork leg. When one introduced or advocated a measure the other opposed it, and their hatred for each other had great effect upon legislation.

The ease with which the bill was passed

A Strange Flaw

through the Senate led Duncan to anticipate no difficulty in the House. He was sure of the support of G. W. Lyer, and that with the prestige of its having passed the Senate, made him confident of success. He had frequently seen, crossing his legs about the House and Senate, a remarkably well dressed, dudified creature whose lofty look, foreign accent, eye glasses and close fitting attire contrasted very strongly with the slovenly appearance of the ordinary legislator, with his coarse, ill-fitting clothes bedaubed with mud and sprinkled with hay-seed. The name of this dainty individual was J. Urebus Dove. After the passage of the bill through the Senate, Mr. Dove danced up to Duncan and presented his card.

"Well, sir, what is it?" asked Duncan.

"Ah, excuse me, my dear fellah, I can assist you."

"How?"

"Ah, pardon me, sir, your bill goes to the House, sir."

"Will you vote for it?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, I am not a member."

"What do you propose?"

A Strange Flaw

"To aid you with my influence, sir. Can you comprehend, my dear boy?"

"Whom can you influence?"

"Ah, indulge me, while I inform you, sir. I am the power behind the throne, as it were. I control the fellows who control the House."

"How?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but that is my source of revenue. Can I serve you?"

"Do you take me for a fool? Good day," said Duncan, and walked off with disgust to think that he had wasted his time conversing with such a vacant simpleton as this dude.

When the land grant bill was brought up for consideration before the House Committee on Public Lands, Mr. Duncan was present, expecting to see its passage recommended without objection.

He was greatly surprised when the Hon. Ham Lamb arose and made a remarkably telling speech against it, denouncing it as a steal, and calling on every honest man to do his utmost to throttle the measure. Duncan saw he had greatly overestimated his chances, and the committee would have probably recommended that the bill "do not pass," but for the Hon. Augustus Alcott, who arose and

A Strange Flaw

made a vigorous speech championing the measure.

Many other members then spoke for and against it, and the matter was submitted to a vote. There were twelve members of the committee and they equally divided upon the question. So two reports were made. One recommended that the bill do pass, signed by six, and one recommended that the bill do not pass, signed by six.

Duncan now became frightened. Never before in all his experience with legislatures had he met such opposition as this. Discussion was almost sure to kill the bill. It would cause delay. Delay would permit investigation and shed light on the plan. The more light, the more danger of defeat. What was to be done? He and G. W. Lyer held many an earnest consultation. The matter had been so much discussed in the committee it would be impossible to avoid discussion in the House, and it looked as though nothing but an absolute purchase of a majority of the House would prevent the defeat of the bill, and the bill being specially set for consideration on the third day after it was reported back to the House, the time was too short to

A Strange Flaw

negotiate. The Hon. Ham Lamb, who led the opposition, had opposed it with so much zeal that it was dangerous to attempt to buy him. Anxiously and fearfully Duncan awaited the onset.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT DEBATE

The House of Representatives had one hundred members, who, at the beginning of the session, induced by the powerful influence of Mr. Lamb, had elected A. Wolf speaker. Consequently, Speaker Wolf liked Lamb much better than Alcott, and that gave him a great advantage over his rival. But Speaker Wolf was never consumed by his love for any one. He had an inordinate ambition and desire for elbow room. Cold as a lizard by nature, he would gladly have made the earth tenantless, in order that he might use it all for his grave. When the bill came up for discussion, the hall was packed to its utmost capacity. The newspapers had notified the world of the great debate that would take place in relation to the bill.

Mary Sweet was seated in a conspicuous place near the speaker's desk, where she could witness the great contest between her lovers.

A Strange Flaw

Conscious of great weakness and trembling with fear we approach the great task of narrating this wonderful debate. Oh, that we could but portray to the reader in all its vivid reality the fires of genius that were lighted, the barrels of enthusiasm uncorked and the scintillations of wit which illumined that grand occasion; that we might inspire all with a higher and a more reverent regard for our lawmakers; that they, knowing the sublime source of our laws, would meekly obey them as the mandates of extreme wisdom. We must content ourselves with imperfectly giving the proceedings of that eventful day. At the opening of the session time was given for presenting petitions and introducing bills. The Rev. Jehosophat Freelove presented a petition from the All-Saints Church, at Casebeer, asking that the constitution of the State be repealed and their creed be enacted in its stead. Hon. Peaseley Ceaser presented a petition from the City Council of Skunkslough asking the legislature to legalize one of its ordinances, which provided that no one be permitted to breathe within its corporate limits before he had procured a license from its mayor, and making it the duty of its police-

A Strange Flaw

men to shut off the wind of all persons attempting to violate the ordinance.

Hon. Theodore Tilton Jones introduced a bill providing that ministers of the gospel be required to register their names at the recorder's office, file a bond and take out license; and that they be required to give the head of the family three days' notice before making a pastoral visit. A bill was introduced by the Hon. M. Pugh, prohibiting doctors from taking commissions on prescriptions and speculating in coffins. Many other petitions and bills of like character were introduced, and then the House proceeded to consider the great land grant bill.

The vast audience had been eagerly waiting for the great debate to begin, and when the Hon. Ham Lamb arose in his seat to open the discussion, all eyes were turned toward him, and all ears strained to catch his words.

To get an idea of this great spectacle, the reader should imagine a great square hall, with immense galleries upon the east and west ends, and tall Gothic windows with panes stained in crimson and purple at the sides. Let the reader sit in the west gallery.

A Strange Flaw

Around you in this gallery you see the flower of the West. Bill Thompson's corduroy trousers kiss the velvet cushions; his cowhide boots caress the plush carpet. His old mother is sitting by him with her knitting, and as she looks around through her steel spectacles, remarks, "Pap never dreamed he'd be elected to such a purty place as this;" and while Bill is squirming around to take in its beauty, he puts his muddy boots on the satin skirt of the President of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She gives him a look that makes him shudder and think what a terrible vixen she must be, and then interrupts her daughter, who is flirting with a dude in the opposite gallery, to show her the soiled skirt. The gallery you are in and the one opposite you are filled with people of both sexes, all ages and positions in society, who are scattered about promiscuously. Above you the frescoed ceiling blossoms with lovely pictures, and below you in the hall that separates the two galleries is the legislature of the State of

As you look down upon the grand assembly, a forest of heads meets your gaze. And what a spectacle! There is the head of Sam-

A Strange Flaw

uel Woodkirk, topped off like a hubbard squash, and fringed at the bottom with corn-silk whiskers; then there are flat heads, thin heads, round heads; heads frosty with years, and heads covered with curls; but the head containing the great brain that's now playing with the destiny of the State is situated near the middle aisle facing the Speaker who sits opposite you on the east side of the hall. 'Tis the glistening bald head of that little man who is so earnestly sawing the air with his right hand and balancing himself with his left, while the torrent of eloquence from his mouth thrills the vast assemblage. This is the Hon. Ham Lamb, now delivering the great speech of the session. As we are behind and above him we do not hear distinctly all his words, but judging from the violent motions that accompany their utterance, and the apparent consternation that seems to agitate his opponents, and the smile of approval that spreads over the broad face of Mary Sweet, we are satisfied that it is a masterpiece. In order that the great debate might not be lost, we procured a verbatim report of it, and will give it to the reader.

A Strange Flaw

The opening speech of the Hon. Ham Lamb was as follows:

Mr. Lamb: "Mr. Speaker!"

Speaker Wolf: "I recognize the Hon. Ham Lamb, from Sheepshire."

Mr. Lamb: "The provisions of the bill which I propose to discuss, carry me back to my boyhood days; when I, a little careless lad, gathered the early spring flowers upon the verdant hillsides. In the dewy freshness of the morning, when the matin birds caroled their hymns of praise, how often have I left my little cottage home, with its vine-clad verandas——"

Patrick Fogarty McDobb: "Mr. Spaker! Mr. Spaker!"

Speaker Wolf: "I recognize Mr. McDobb, from New Dublin."

Mr. McDobb: "Mr. Spaker, I call the gintleman to order; he's not spakin' to the pint."

Speaker Wolf: "I sustain the point of order."

Mr. Lamb: "Leaving the cottage of my youth, as I had done when interrupted, I will now, in the brief time allotted to me, strike at once for the core of this bill. Last even-

A Strange Flaw

ing, while watching the golden sunset that streamed through the windows of my room, and musing upon the passing pageant of earth life, in a second the events of the next fifty years seemed to flit before me. I saw the palaces of millionaires with their silver minarets glitter in the sun. I saw their tables loaded with the choicest viands of earth. I saw dogs gnawing the bones of little children, who had died of starvation in the shadow of these palaces. The scene was changed. I saw mountains of corn rotting in the sun, and I saw hundreds of swine fattening upon the carcasses of beggars, who either died of starvation or were slain while attempting to steal the corn. And seeing these sights, how I did yearn for posterity. Oh, poor, misguided posterity, may God pity you and save you from your sad fate is——”

Mr. McDobb: “Mr. Spaker! Mr. Spaker!”

Speaker Wolf: “I recognize Mr. McDobb of New Dublin.”

Mr. McDobb: “The gentleman is not spaking to the pint.”

Speaker Wolf: “Millionaires’ palaces and rotten corn may have some connection with

A Strange Flaw

railroad land grants. I will permit the gentleman to proceed."

Mr. Lamb: "Going back again to posterity, I will at once, without further preliminaries, examine in its essence, the bill under discussion. What is it, let me ask, makes the lot of the poor so hard?"

Messenger from the Senate: "Mr. Speaker, the Senate has just passed house bill 19731, requiring that beggars break rocks at the rate of three cents a day, the proceeds to be devoted to the erection of a monument to the late lamented Thomas Jones."

Mr. Lamb: "Returning again to my subject, I wish to narrate an incident of mighty Pericles of Greece, how——"

Mr. Cowslip: "Say, Speaker——"

Speaker Wolf: "I recognize the Hon. Hank Cowslip, from Slop county."

Mr. Cowslip: "Pear trees and grease ain't got a darned thing to do with this argument. When a hen wants to hatch a chicken out of an egg she has it sot on, but this man's egg will get rotten 'fore he gits on to it."

Mr. Lamb: "The gentleman from Slop does not understand me."

A Strange Flaw

Mr. Cowslip: "Nor no one else; he's too highfalutin'. No use of a goose trying to fly like an eagle, he'll wobble a wing off. See here, Clerk, read that air bill ag'in and let's see if he can't get to the trough before he empties the swill. Say, Hide, give me a chaw of terbacker."

Speaker Wolf: "The reading of the bill is called for. Mr. Clerk, read the bill."

Reading Clerk: "The bill reads as follows:

" 'SENATE FILE 10101.

" 'AN ACT to relieve the settlers of certain counties.

" 'Whereas, the citizens who reside in the counties through which the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company have partially completed an important line of railway, are now in great need because of short crops, high taxes, sickness, devouring insects and sweeping tornadoes which have vexed them to the verge of extreme poverty and helplessness; and,

" 'Whereas, these meek and benevolent people have for years filled the treasury of the State, and the coffers of charitable institu-

A Strange Flaw

tions with taxes which their generous hands have willingly paid; and,

“ ‘Whereas, these kind and afflicted people have never before asked any favor of this State and now ask but a meagre return for the blessings they have so freely showered upon it;

“ ‘Therefore be it enacted by the Grand Assembly of ———

“ ‘That all the lands now held by this State, or in which it has an interest, that were granted to it by the United States for the purposes of internal improvement be and are hereby granted to the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company to have and hold forever, to aid it in the completion of its railroad through this afflicted locality.

“ ‘This act being deemed of immediate importance shall take effect and be enforced from and after its publication in the *“Morning Moralist”* of Bigburg and *“The Fountain of Truth”* of Littletown.’ ”

Mr. Lamb: “Without further digression or illustration, and ignoring all surrounding circumstances, I now propose to concentrate my attention upon the essence of the bill just

A Strange Flaw

read. The frequent interruptions which I have suffered have had the effect of disintegrating my intelligence and scattering my thoughts; and if I have not spoken directly to the point I propose now, by the extreme brevity and directness of my remarks, to atone for any mistakes heretofore made. In parliamentary discussion, nothing is more desirable than that the discussion of a question be narrowed down to the very point in issue, and it is my strongest desire, to without fuss or flourish reach the very heart of the subject under consideration. By so doing much time will be saved and the debate, liable otherwise to be continued for a great length of time, may be reduced to such an extent as to greatly abbreviate the session and——”

Mr. McDobb: “Mister Spaker, Mister Spaker.”

“Speaker Wolf: “I again recognize the Hon. Mr. McDobb of New Dublin.”

Mr. McDobb: “The gintleman is not spaking to the pint. The avils that he’s after givin’ us——”

Mr. McDobb was here interrupted by the falling of one of the ornaments attached to the ceiling over his head. This was com-

A Strange Flaw

posed of plaster and weighed several pounds. When it fell it struck the Hon. McDobb on the crown of his head and broke into many fragments, which flew in every direction. Not knowing what hit him and supposing in his half stunned condition that it was some one sitting near him who was trying to suppress him, in a wild and frantic manner he began striking right and left at everybody and everything within his reach, using language too forcible to mention and more emphatic than polite. Before the sergeant-at-arms, aided by the janitor, could arrest his violence, he had blacked the eye of Empty Jones, broken a rib of the Hon. Peasly Caesar and stripped the collar and a part of the shirt from the Rev. Jehosophat Freelove.

In the terrible excitement and panic which followed this occurrence, the women screamed and rushed for the door. The commotion they made, combined with the noise made by the men in attempting to quiet them, the pounding of the gavel of the speaker in an effort to restore order, the continued antics of McDobb, the howls of the wounded around him, the noise of their flight, and the scuffle with the sergeant-at-arms and the janitor, converted

A Strange Flaw

the lower house of this legislature into a pandemonium appalling to the strongest nerves.

Amid the excitement Mary Sweet fainted. This immediately brought to her side the Hon. Augustus Alcott and the Hon. Ham Lamb. The Hon. Ham Lamb insisted that he would remain with the fainting lady while the Hon. Augustus Alcott went for a physician.

But this did not suit the Hon. Gentleman, so he, fearing the dangers that might befall her in his absence, thought best to save time by taking her along with him to see the physician. So, like the bold Cossack of the desert, he grasped her fainting form in his arms and triumphantly strode up the aisle, followed by the hobbling gait of the Hon. Ham Lamb, who was trying to fan her pallid face with his hat.

On account of the great confusion thus engendered and the absence of the two champions, the House adjourned until the following day. When Duncan observed the devotion manifested by the Hon. Ham Lamb for Miss Mary Sweet, he said to Geo. W. Lyer: "I believe I have discovered the key to the position. That Sweet girl undoubtedly has

A Strange Flaw

great influence over Mr. Lamb. I shall at once attempt to work her in the interest of the grant."

So that same day Duncan sought and found the abode of Miss Mary Sweet and obtained an interview with her. She politely referred him to her friend and counselor, J. Urebus Dove, who, she stated, would negotiate with him, and any arrangements he made she would comply with. Having before treated Mr. Dove in such an abrupt and contemptuous manner, Mr. Duncan did not desire to so humiliate himself as to seek his service; but as time was short and there seemed no other alternative, he at last concluded to do so. He found J. Urebus in a neatly furnished room at the ——— House, smoking his cigar and reading the New York Clipper. As the great railroad king approached him, Mr. Dove adjusted his eye glasses and looked at him with a lofty and critical glance, as he said:

"Ah, fellow, what do you require?"

"I called, Mr. Dove, to apologize to you for my abrupt manner toward you the other day. My excuse, sir, is that not being acquainted with you, I did not properly estimate

A Strange Flaw

the value of your friendship and your personal importance."

"Ah, I fear you flatter me, my dear boy," I accept your apology. Good day."

"I beg your pardon," continued Duncan, "but I have a little matter of business that I wish to talk about, I wish to secure your valuable assistance."

"Ah, my dear fellow, I cannot now be interrupted. I wish to finish this highly entertaining article. Call again."

To be thus dallied with by a dude was very provoking to Mr. Duncan, who was accustomed to have other people wait on his leisure, but he rallied again and said, "When shall I call?"

"In one hour from now I will see you," said Mr. Dove. Duncan then left, but returned in one hour. Mr. Dove was still reading, and required Mr. Duncan to sit in silence for another hour, waiting for him to finish.

This done, Mr. Duncan proceeded to plead his cause before this autocrat, who composed the 3rd House of the legislature of the State of —.

After much parleying, Duncan and the dude agreed upon the share which the lat-

A Strange Flaw

ter was to have in the steal, in case he secured the passage of the bill.

They then separated.

On the evening of that day, the Hon. Ham Lamb received an invitation to a card party at the residence of Miss Mary Sweet. On the following day the speaker announced with much regret that owing to indisposition, the Hon. Ham Lamb was not able to be in his seat. It was also noticeable that Mary Sweet was not in attendance.

After the usual preliminaries were disposed of, the great debate on the land grant bill was resumed. The towering form of the Ajax of the House, the Hon. Augustus Alcott, was seen erect and fronting the speaker's desk. Furiously his flaming hair waved, as he swayed his head from side to side, while from his powerful lungs a mighty torrent of eloquence poured forth, filling with consternation the opponents of the bill. We know how vain the attempt to transfer his burning words to paper, but we give the report of his great speech the best we can.

Mr. Alcott: "Mr. Speaker."

Speaker Wolf: "I recognize the Hon. Augustus Alcott from Shanghai."

A Strange Flaw

Mr. Alcott: "Mr. Lamb is sick; I am sorry. He studs his speech with stuff about posterity. He rears and prances like a Kentucky whip. He steps high and short, but he trips himself. What makes him rave about posterity? What has this bald-headed bachelor done for posterity? Nothing that anybody knows of. While I have been raising my eleven children, he's been cultivating flowers and raising canary birds. Let him get married and do something for posterity. He talks about children starving in the shade of millionaires' houses. Whose children? None of his I'll warrant you. If it wasn't for more enterprising men there would be no children to starve. He needn't worry about my children. They know too much to get in the shade and starve when there is a chance to graze in the sun. He says something about rotten corn, and beggars starving to get to it. That's just what we want a railroad for. To take the corn to beggars before it rots and the beggars to the corn before they starve.

"If Mr. Lamb would spend less time in watchin' the sun set, and more raisin' corn to rot for want of a market, and raise children instead of canary birds, and cultivate brains

A Strange Flaw

instead of flowers, he might not be so flowery, but would know more. That's what I've got to say about what he says. Just another word and I'll be through. I'm dealing in horse flesh, and if you fellows are mind to be fools enough to vote to keep this iron horse out of the country, why I'll continue to furnish you with thoroughbred stallions just as I have done, and it won't be a dollar out of my pocket. The more railroads the less horses. There isn't a girl in my class at the reform school but has brains enough to see as plain a point as that." •

The roll was then called and the vote was taken. Just as his name was called the Hon. Ham Lamb came in and asked the privilege of explaining his vote as he gave it. He said that facts had been brought to his notice since the last adjournment, which caused him to look at the matter in a very different light. That he had discovered that the lands to be granted were worthless, and the railroad to be constructed of inestimable benefit to the State. He therefore voted aye. The vote when taken showed the bill to have passed by only one majority.

The Hon. John H. Beer was then gov-

A Strange Flaw

ernor. He had formerly been a dealer in dried fruits and sour mash whiskey, but when the prohibition wave struck the "Good Party" it called him from his retirement to stand upon its prohibition platform and head its temperance ticket. The governor had a beautiful pair of rosy eyes that sat on either side of an illuminated proboscis, which was well suited to illustrate the evil effect of intemperance. What his countenance lacked in beauty it made up in color, which if well distributed might have made him a very handsome man. Unlike many other great moral leaders, his exalted position did not make him proud. He was as familiar as a female book peddler; as easy of access as a saloon. He would talk politics to a bootblack and ask advice of a newsboy. His simple ways endeared him to the people. He regarded the office of governor as purely executive, and would have signed his own death warrant had it passed both houses of the legislature, and when the land grant was handed him he signed it without reading and ordered its publication, which was accordingly done and the bill became a law.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIAL

Since Bragg first came to Littletown, Foghorn had steadfastly opposed him. That opposition had borne no fruit save in bringing Foghorn into ill repute, and now he was forsaken by the community, despised by his neighbors, and his business as a lawyer gone, and he was reduced to extreme poverty. Alone and poor, he stood firm and unshaken in the path of duty, but the days seemed very dark to the old man. He had grown weary of sitting in his office from one month's end to another, without a client or even a visitor, save Harry or some person that came to dun him for a debt. Harry also felt much discouraged in striving for a pursuit which had brought so little good to his venerable friend. One day he said, "Let's leave this country, Mr. Foghorn; everybody hates us. Your business is destroyed and we will soon be driven out by poverty."

A Strange Flaw

"No," said Foghorn, "I have put in my whole life trying to benefit humanity, and I am not going to quit now. Have patience, Harry, there will be a change some day."

"It's mighty slow coming," said Harry, "I'm afraid we won't live to see it."

While they were talking heavy footsteps were heard upon the stairs and in a moment a stout, burly, blustering, full whiskered man came in with a bunch of papers in his right hand and a sack full at his side. He opened a notice and read it to Foghorn and handed him a copy. Then read one to Harry and handed him a copy, and then went hurriedly out. They were notices to quit. Foghorn was notified to quit his homestead and his office, and surrender the possession of the same to the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, who claimed to be the owners, by virtue of a legislative grant of recent date.

When these notices were read the two men looked at each other with blank astonishment. At last Harry said:

"It seems we haven't reached the bottom yet."

A Strange Flaw

"I don't understand this," said Foghorn, reading the notice over and over again.

"Don't understand it!" echoed Harry impetuously, "why, the cursed company is going to take away all your property and deprive mother and me of all we have."

"But this says something about a legislative grant. It can't be that the legislature has granted my property and yours. They surely have no right to do that," said Foghorn.

While they were talking, a man, wild with excitement, came in brandishing a notice in his hand; he was followed by another and another until the office was filled with an angry and excited crowd, who were anxious to consult Mr. Foghorn. Out on the street there was a large crowd waiting for a chance to get in, all of them holding notices in their hands and greatly excited. They had all been notified to quit by the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, and knowing that Foghorn had always opposed the railroad scheme, they now eagerly sought him for his advice. The most he could do was to take their notices and promise to look after their cases. All the afternoon until late in the

A Strange Flaw

evening a continual throng of anxious clients, young men and old, widows and orphans, administrators of estates, guardians of wards, trustees of churches, preachers, doctors, farmers, and all classes, rushed to Foghorn's office to find out what was the matter and employ him. At last Geo. W. Lyer came in and wanted to engage the services of Foghorn to defend the firm of Lyer Bros. in the matter. The Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company had been no respecter of persons. It had notified both friend and foe, regardless of past services, to quit and vacate every inch of earth inside the region of the grant. This had caused a complete change of sentiment, and on the next evening an indignation meeting was held at the Court House. A committee was sent to escort Mr. Foghorn and his clerk to the meeting, and this committee went to the office and carried them to the Court House on their shoulders. As soon as they entered, Foghorn was loudly called for, to speak, and he arose and said:

"Sublime idiots, where is the Hon. Henderson Bragg? Gilt edged and rainbowed aristocrats, where is the Sound and Reliable Railroad Company? At our last meeting the

A Strange Flaw

priest of the oracle was here, holding the destiny of Littletown in his hands. Where is he now, and in which hand? (Some man shouted out, "He holds it now in his pocket.") At that meeting I made some reflections upon the character of that honorable gentleman, and you passed a resolution. I would like to have the proceedings of that meeting read. You would not hear me then. It may be too late to hear me now. You have stepped into the trap and sprung it. You have jumped at the fly and caught the hook."

He then explained to them how they must wait until the question of title could be tried by the courts. That in his opinion it was not possible for the State legislature to grant to a railroad company lands that had been patented to the people by the general government. When the meeting adjourned, many flocked around Foghorn to tell him that they had been his friends all the time. Circumstances of a few days had brought a great change. Two days ago he had not a friend in the village, except Harry; now everybody looked to Foghorn as their savior. Two days ago he had no clients at all. Now nearly every man in the county was his client, and

A Strange Flaw

men came in from other counties to employ him. It seemed like a new and strange life to him.

The time having elapsed in which the people were notified to quit, and they refusing to surrender their homes to the railroad company, suits were brought in the United States Circuit Court, which convened at Bigburg the following May.

The questions that arose in all the cases were identical and had to be submitted to the court without a jury. They depended solely upon the construction of the original grant, and that construction wholly upon the reading of one word, and that word entirely upon the reading of the first two letters, and if one of those letters could be read, the other was easy to read; so the fate of thousands of families depended upon the reading of one letter. When the cases came on for trial, they were ordered to be tried together.

The court room was crowded to its utmost capacity with an eager and anxious throng, and thousands of hearts, scattered over the state, beat in great suspense waiting to hear the result. The original grant was brought into court. All before and after the doubtful

A Strange Flaw

letters was read again and again. The Hon. Galusha Parsnip appeared as attorney for the company and intended to make a great argument to prove that the first letter of the word was i instead of e, and therefore, by necessity, the next letter must be n instead of x.

He intended to introduce specimens of handwriting in nineteen different languages and seven hundred specimens in one language, and cite authorities to maintain the proposition that all grants to railroad companies had heretofore been held to include everything and exclude nothing, and to speak eloquently of the immense advantage railroads had been to the country; and of the self-sacrificing zeal of capitalists, who had invested their hard earnings in the unsettled West.

When the cases were called for trial Mr. Parsnip had brought and spread out upon the tables in front of the bench, several hundred volumes in different languages and upon many subjects. He evidently designed to immortalize himself by making an eternal speech.

Knowing the habits of Parsnip, and fearing an endless essay on matters foreign to the case, the judge stated that the court

A Strange Flaw

had decided to limit the speeches of counsel on each side to one hour. Mr. Parsnip arose and, after taking up half his time in making an apology, explaining how he had been called into the case without any opportunity to prepare his argument, said to the court that if it had any doubt in relation to the position that he took, he would furnish it a written brief. He then began his argument as follows:

“Anterior to the creation of man——”

“Come, come, Mr. Parsnip,” thundered the judge, “come down to the facts in this case. This court cannot sit and listen to what happened prior to the creation. Reserve that for a geological work. What is the point in this case? Read the grant.”

This rebuke would have tarnished the cheek of some men, but Parsnip was unblanched. He continued:

“Your Honor may know better how to argue this case than I do, but you fail to comprehend my intention. When interrupted I was proceeding to show the court how handwriting was originally made upon the rocks by Deity, and so suggested to man. I then proposed to exhibit to your Honors a photograph copy of the laws of Moses, which were

A Strange Flaw

written under the immediate supervision of God himself, on tables of stone."

"How is that material to this case?" demanded the judge.

"I propose, then, to show that Moses made an i just like the letter in the grant, which the defendants claim is e," continued Parsnip.

"Wherein is that important?" asked the court.

"Why, you see," said Parsnip, "the only question in these cases is whether a certain word is 'including' or 'excluding,' and if the first letter in the word is i, the plaintiff must succeed."

"Is that all there is in these cases?" asked the chief justice.

"It is," answered Parsnip.

"Have you any decisions of the United States Supreme Court on this grant?" further inquired the judge.

"No, your Honor," replied Parsnip, "but I have the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments, written under the immediate supervision of Almighty God, and I suppose your Honor respects such authority as that."

"I respect it, but I do not follow it," roared the judge. "If you have any decisions of this

A Strange Flaw

court or the Supreme Court on the point, read them; if not, sit down. Mr. Foghorn, have you any such decisions on this grant?"

"No," said Foghorn, rising to his feet, "but I wish to explain to your Honor the terrible effect of your decision, if it should be given in favor of the plaintiff; how many people you will render homeless."

"Save yourself that trouble, Mr. Foghorn," said the judge. "This court dispenses justice without regard to the rights of parties. Pass us the grant and the other papers and we will look at them after we adjourn."

Thus, this great question was summarily submitted and might have been otherwise decided, were it not for the fact that when the judge came back after dinner, and looked at the grant, he discovered a little dot over the first letter in the doubtful word, and he concluded that the first letter was i, and therefore that the second must be n in order to make sense, and decided that the railroad company was the owner of all the lands embracing several counties and ordered writs of ejectment against the inhabitants thereof. This was a crushing blow to Foghorn, for the writs of ejectment could not be stayed by an

A Strange Flaw

appeal, without a bond, which the settlers were unable to give.

When the news arrived at Littletown, of the court's decision, the people could hardly believe it. At last, when they came to the dreadful realization of the fact, hundreds solemnly declared that they would never leave their homes alive. Again and again did they curse the evil day that Bragg came to Littletown. Again and again did they bewail their folly in refusing to listen to Foghorn. The horror, felt by all, had suspended business. Women and children were walking to and fro in the streets, looking into each other's despairing faces, asking if there was no hope. They flocked around Foghorn by the hundreds, but he was silent. He could promise them nothing, except he would appeal the case. Despair at last grew into desperation, and men of all classes vowed impulsively to defend their homes with the last drop of their blood. With clenched fists and lowering brows, through their set jaws, they demanded a leader.

They were ready to take up arms against the government, if it should seek to enforce the unjust decree. They asked Foghorn to

A Strange Flaw

lead them. He refused and advised submission, telling them that it was useless to fight the government of the United States. A meeting for the purposes of organization was called at the Court House, and when they had assembled to organize, the first question that came before the meeting was, what the organization should be called. Elder Goodman insisted that it should be named "God's Children," while R. Gospel Windysoul insisted that the name of God should not be connected with it. Judge Muller insisted that it be called "The Good Party League," and Hans Dummeldeutch contended that it should be called the "German-American Band," and nearly every sect and clique in society had a different name with which they wanted to christen the organization. The debate became very warm and bitter, and each champion was unyielding in his views. A motion was made to call it "God's Children," by the Methodist party, and a half dozen amendments made to it by persons desiring to give it a different name, and these motions were all substituted by a motion offered by G. W. Lyer that the organization have no name at all. This was amended by H. E. Q. Grip,

A Strange Flaw

who wished it to be called all the names which had been proposed for it, and on these motions, amendments, substitutes and amended substitutes the violence of the debate continued until nearly midnight, and when the question was finally put it was defeated, and the several parties became so greatly enraged that they left the room, denouncing each other as having been the aiders and abettors of Bragg and his scheme.

During all this time there burned in Harry Hawkins' breast an ambition to be the savior of the community. If he could only defeat this unjust decree and remedy the terrible wrongs perpetrated by these railroad schemers, how blessed his name would be to all posterity. The opportunity that he had so often hoped for was now at hand. He would cut loose from all the cliques and organize a band of young men like himself, and they would carry on a guerrilla warfare against the officers who might seek to enforce the decree. His cause, he was certain, was just, and it could not fail to succeed. He was goaded on to this course by the recollections of the terrible wrongs which he and those he loved had

A Strange Flaw

suffered, and now he was ready to fight till death. So he organized a few hundred young men, who announced themselves determined to fight to the last.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER XIV

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Meanwhile Foghorn worked diligently, perfecting his appeals in the cases. This litigation occurred before the United States Circuit Court of Appeals was created, and hence cases were directly reviewed by the Supreme Court of the United States. This court was composed of nine judges, who dressed in black alpaca kimonas, and at precisely high noon appeared in solemn pomp and arranged themselves upon the bench in their great arm-chairs. Much study and deep thought and the weighty cares and responsibilities of their offices had caused most of them to accumulate a portliness that an alderman might envy. Notwithstanding the fact that the settlers were unable to give bonds to stay the execution of the writ to eject them, and Duncan could at any time order such writs to issue, he refrained from doing so until after the hearing of the cases on appeal, dreading the

A Strange Flaw

trouble sure to follow the dispossessing of the people and the effect it might have on the hearings. The importance of the cases enabled Foghorn to get their hearing advanced, and finally before the ponderous presence of the royal nine came the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, pleading for justice against these citizens who insisted upon occupying its property. One of the nine had sat on the Circuit bench, and tried the case in the court below, and so could take no part in its decision on the appeal. The cases were ordered argued and submitted together, and attorneys representing each side permitted to make oral argument and submit written briefs. There were other attorneys who represented the settlers, but Enoch Foghorn was the one on whose shoulders the main responsibility was placed. It seemed as if all his previous experiences had been fitting him for this supreme occasion. He had come into this country in an early day and had witnessed the trials and struggles of the settlers in building their homes. He had watched their children grow up from infancy and he had that honest character which despises fraud and detests hypocrisy, however masked, and he could

A Strange Flaw

feel in his own person the horrible injustice of the lower court's decree, and when he arose to address the Supreme judges his brow beetled ominously and his eyes were like flaming swords that searched for the very inwards of the occupants of the bench. His voice trembled, but not with weakness. It was the hoarse diapason of the gathering tempest. As he proceeded it stiffened in timbre until its tones became terrible and fear spread among his opponents. The judges leaned forward with robes awry, as if they were tied to the speaker by invisible bonds, and from the expression of their faces it was clear that he was playing upon their heart-strings, when he told them how his clients had come to this land when it was wild, drove out the reptiles and savage beasts, tore up the stumps, removed the stones and made it fit for tillage. How they had endured the pinching winters and the scorching summers, and by their long and patient toil and self-denial had, from these rugged and hard conditions, saved up the price the nation asked and bought their patents from the government, assuring them of perfect title. And now it was proposed, in their old age, to strip them of their lands and make

A Strange Flaw

them paupers in life's dreary winter and give their homes to other men to multiply their millions, who had never given a farthing for these lands; and this in the name of Justice. When he said this each judge grew red about his temples, his eyes beamed with a holy light that came from his inmost soul, his eyelids seemed inflamed and swollen with tears of righteous pity, and Bragg then thought the judgment day was coming. Foghorn then felt the universe at his back; that all the martyred dead who had died for justice had risen again, and with myriads of mighty angels were fighting for his cause. He then, in tones that touched the very marrow of his auditors, said:

"You, sirs, are sitting on the loftiest seat that man has ever raised before high heaven. 'Tis grounded on the graves of men who ever fought for human rights. Their blood cements its structure and your panoply must ever be a nation's confidence and trust. Great souls have been your predecessors. Their brave and honest minds, with justice ever for their guide, have made this seat a hallowed shrine, fit only for such as consecrate themselves to such a cause. But never since this

A Strange Flaw

pinnacle was raised has any occupant had a better chance to slay a hydra-headed fiend than you now have. If you are worthy of this lofty seat and fit to wear the halo which adorns this place, now show your mettle. Say to this gang of pirates that the stars and stripes still stand for justice and for human rights, and to the thousands that these scoundrels would despoil, speak the strong assurance of a nation's faith whose mighty arm still shields the weak and curbs the strong. Do this and break the clouds that cover this fair land and threaten to destroy a thousand homes. Do this and send the inspiring rays of hope into ten thousand now despairing hearts. Do this and raise so high above the mists of doubt and crime the beauteous image of the eternal right that all the world shall see and men of every clime and age arise and call you blessed."

When Foghorn ceased his speech the very air in all the hall seemed charged by power invisible, and all who heard him felt the gates were closed against the opposition. Duncan's attorney, Parsnip, made a feeble effort to reply, but his voice sounded so wicked and out of place that even he felt guilty of a crime

A Strange Flaw

in trying to defend his client. It seemed as if hosts of liveried angels were hissing at him from every quarter of the hall. His tongue was partly palsied, his ideas fought each other and his words came forth in incoherent tangles, and every point he tried to make was like a blow struck by a rubber weapon on a wall of adamant, that bounded back and hit the assailant. The judges settled backward in their chairs, and on their faces one could plainly read that they were set against him, and so they had remained had not a dot been noticed on the grant. While thus engaged in argument descanting on the first two letters of the word, and looking at the grant, Parsnip observed a little speck above the letter which he claimed was i, and seeing this he started like he had seen a spirit. It was an inspiration and his dull and stupid argument now became forceful. Raising the grant in one hand before the court, and pointing the index finger of the other to this speck, he shouted loudly, "See here, your Honors, how the i is dotted! 'Tis small, indeed, but large enough to place the imprint of eternal truth upon the justice of our cause."

Foghorn was on his feet in a moment and

A Strange Flaw

demanded to see the grant, denounced the dot a forgery and declared it was not on the grant when the suit was in the lower court. The excitement became intense. The judges asked to see the grant, and sure enough there was a dot. That seemed to fix the status of the letter written first, and thus the reading of the grant. The judge who tried the case below, being present, soon quieted the disturbance by declaring the dot was there when he tried it. From that time on, Parsnip had easy sailing. He felt his case was won, and so declared, and by their looks the judges seemed unanimous for him. When Foghorn took the floor to make reply, it was a trying situation. 'Tis difficult for any lawyer to meet such a surprise on so short a notice. For a moment he stood silent, gathering force. Then starting in low tones, clear but scarcely audible, his voice became louder as he proceeded, and from a small beginning he launched forth a mighty torrent against his adversary. He pictured before the court in lines of fire the avalanche of misery that must descend upon the wretched people on these lands if Parsnip should prevail. "Could this mere speck," he asked, "small as a gnat's

A Strange Flaw

'egg, thinner than the shadow of a lie, be made a pretext to commit so great a crime?— a mark that any one could forge at any time without discovery." Who had placed it there, he said, was now unknown, and yet 'twas claimed this trifling thing should be sufficient to cause the nation's grant, made to its honest citizens, a cheat and lie. Then casting his eyes around the hall he raised his hands imploringly, as if invoking the unseen, and said: "Spirits of Marshall and of Jay, and all the mighty dead whose memories glorify this storied hall, have all the broad foundations that you laid for Justice and for human rights shrunk to so small a point? Have all the pillars of this temple that your hands so firmly placed become so weak and rotten that a plea like this can find an audience in so great a court? If this is Justice, burn up your dockets, and resign; tear down the Goddess with her even-handed scales, install the impenitent thief the nation's patron saint and ask some fiend of hell to write the name of fraud on every facade of this capitol."

Thus the cases were submitted to be decided when the court got ready. Immediately thereafter Duncan concluded to dispossess the

A Strange Flaw

people of their lands, and accordingly ordered writs of ejectment to issue on the judgments obtained in the court below.

Finally, one Autumn afternoon in the month of October, three men drove into Littletown. They were the United States marshal and his deputies. They found the village quiet and everybody busy at work when they arrived. As they surveyed this peaceful little place, in the yellow sunlight of Autumn, with its humble people dwelling in the little homes they had built years ago, and working patiently to earn an honest living for themselves and families, and they thought of the task which they were commanded to perform, the hearts of the officers nearly failed them. The marshal said to those with him, "Gentlemen, I hate this job. Here these people are quietly at work and peacefully dwelling in the cottages they have built, and to turn them out in the cold on the threshold of the coming Winter seems too hard. I would resign my office if I could prevent its being done, but if we don't do it some one else will, and we might as well commence."

So they drove up to a little house near by them, hitched their horses and got out to

A Strange Flaw

begin their work. A soldier's widow, by the name of Mary Marion, with a little family of children, occupied this house. The marshal, Horace Ketchem, knocked at the door. She opened it and pleasantly invited him to have a seat. Her three little children, a girl of seven, a boy of five and a girl of three, seeing a stranger come in, clung close to their mother and looked at him with great curiosity. The sight of these helpless children, gathered about this weak and defenseless mother, might have stayed the march of a hyena, and the marshal more than ever felt a shrinking from his task. But he was the executor of a cruel law, which spared neither widows nor orphans. He had a writ issued in the name of the president of the United States, sealed and attested by a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, commanding him to commit the monstrous crime. He asked her name. "Mary Marion," she said, hoping that it was some friend or comrade of her dead husband that had come to help them. The marshal found his writ against her and turning to her said:

"Madam, I have a very unpleasant duty to perform. The Circuit Court of the United

A Strange Flaw

States has decided that this property upon which you are living belongs to the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, and I have come with a writ of ejectment to put you off."

"Oh! that cannot be," said she, in great fright and astonishment. "My poor husband bought this place and paid for it before he went to fight for his country. And when we parted he said with tears in his eyes, 'Mary, darling, if I do not return, never sell this little cottage. I have paid for it, and if I shall be slain, you and the children will always have a home.' I have the deed in the house and I can show it to you."

"You need not mind," said the marshal; "you must leave this place immediately, and if you do not the law makes it my duty to compel you to."

"Then you will have to compel me to," she said, as she began sobbing, and her little children clustered around her saying, "Don't cry, mamma, don't cry, mamma."

The marshal then began setting her chairs out in the street. As soon as she saw him doing that, she fell on her knees at his feet, and in the most pleading and piteous tones

A Strange Flaw

said, "Oh, spare me for the sake of my poor children. Do not turn us out of doors. We have no place to go. The cold winter will come and I shall be without shelter for myself and little ones. God will bless you if you will but spare me. Have you no pity for a poor widow and her helpless orphans?"

"It is useless to plead," said Ketchem, "it is not I but the law that turns you out. I only do my duty."

"Oh, cruel law," she sobbed. "Oh, wicked duty, to render widows and orphans homeless. This house is no use to you. You would not live here. Oh, for God's sake please let us stay here. I will work for you. I will wash and sew night and day. I will do anything if you will only let us stay until my little ones are old enough to take care of themselves. Oh, do let us stay!"

"I would let you stay if I could, but the court has ordered me to put you out and out you must go," said he sternly as he pushed her away.

Chairs sitting in the street soon attracted attention, and it was rumored that the officers had come to turn the people out of their homes. Harry heard of it and he, with a

A Strange Flaw

dozen more, went to where the marshal and his deputies were carrying out furniture. As soon as he saw Mrs. Marion and her little children weeping, Harry's indignation was aroused to the highest pitch. He approached the marshal and accosted him thus:

"What are you doing, sir?"

"I am executing a writ of ejectment, if it is any of your business," replied the marshal.

"It's every man's business when a helpless woman and her little children are being turned into the streets," answered Harry. "And it's my business to tell you to carry that furniture back where you got it, immediately, if you expect to leave here alive."

"Who are you that dares interfere with the officers of the law?" demanded the marshal.

"I am a man that has no respect for the officers or the law that would steal from this poor widow her home," responded Harry.

"Don't you know that the Circuit Court of the United States has decided that this property belongs to the Railroad Company?" asked the marshal.

"Don't you know that the people of Little-town have appealed from that decision?" shouted Harry, defiantly.

A Strange Flaw

"Why do you not give bonds and stop the writ of ejectment?" asked the marshal.

"We cannot, but we can appeal to arms and the god of battles," continued Harry. "Tell the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, if it wants our homes, it must walk over our graves to get them. We will defend our firesides with our lives. Our court has issued a writ of mandamus commanding you to carry that furniture back and get out of this town inside of thirty minutes, or your necks will be stretched to the nearest tree, and we have come to execute that writ and you had better be at it."

The marshal saw that he was overpowered with numbers, and it was useless to refuse, so he and his deputies reluctantly carried the furniture back to its place. When they had done, Harry said, "Now you get out of this country as soon as your horses can carry you."

And they went. As they were driving away the people clapped their hands and yelled, "Good bye, come again," in derision. Women shook their handkerchiefs at them and boys yelled at them as they rode through the streets.

The conduct of Harry and his associates

A Strange Flaw

was highly applauded. He was looked upon as a hero. He had no trouble in organizing a large company, of which he was made captain, ready to meet force with force when it came.

In a few days the marshal appeared again with a hundred United States soldiers in regular uniforms, armed with swords and muskets. They began to put Mrs. Marion's furniture out into the street again.

Oh, it was a noble sight to see. One hundred great, broad-shouldered men, uniformed and knapsacked, belted and labeled U. S., and armed to the teeth, engaged in vanquishing a weeping woman, and putting her and her children into the streets to carry out Duncan's infamous scheme; but the Circuit Court had said it was justice.

Harry and his men were ready. They scattered themselves behind trees and buildings awaiting the onset, and watching for the first man that should appear from the house with any of the widow's furniture. Soon one of the deputy marshals came out with a chair in each hand, and just as he passed through the gate, crack, crack, crack, went a dozen rifles, and he fell dead, perforated with bul-

A Strange Flaw

lets. It now began to be a serious business; the other deputy and the marshal had just started out with chairs, but they set them down to think a minute. They didn't like the aspect of affairs. The enemy were all in ambush. They could not see any one to shoot and they were in an exposed place, where, if they kept at work they might be shot down, one at a time, like sheep. Finally they concluded to go back and get more help and subjugate the country as they proceeded. So they picked up their dead comrade and retreated in good order.

In a few days a thousand men of the regular army, with several pieces of artillery, came with the marshal to execute the writs of ejectment.

In order to intimidate the people, when they got to the outskirts of the town, they fired their cannon and sent several shells screaming through the air. They then sent a messenger to treat with the inhabitants, threatening to kill every one without regard to age or sex, if any further resistance was made, and demanding that Harry and his comrades lay down their arms.

The women and children, in terror, were

A Strange Flaw

screaming in the streets. Old men, ghastly with fear, advised submission. The utter hopelessness of resistance seemed apparent. Many of Harry's comrades weakened and he saw that he would soon be alone, and now comprehended the foolhardiness of the undertaking which sympathy had led him into. As he looked in the blank faces and heard the tremulous voices, and saw the quivering forms of his comrades whose courage had melted away so quickly, he decided to abandon resistance by arms and resort to strategy.

As soon as the message was returned that the people would lay down their arms, the marshal immediately ordered the arrest of their leader for high treason, and a detachment was sent for him. They asked Mrs. Marion who he was, and she told them it was Harry Hawkins, and where he might be found. As soon as he was arrested the work of ejectionment was continued. Family after family were turned into the streets. In some instances a soldier was left in possession; in others the door was locked, and by nightfall a hundred families were homeless. It was a pitiful sight to see. When the morning came the work of ejectionment went on. It is useless

A Strange Flaw

to follow it with all its hideousness. It is the same sad story through and through. It was an excruciating sight at best, but it was supremely so to see Harry's mother turned out of the old homestead into the street, but Harry was saved from that. He was taken to Bigburg and thrust into prison.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER XV

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

The cloud that had so long been gathering over the unfortunate people of the country which lay in the shadow of the "Flaw" discovered by the tramp, had at last burst with all its fury.

Homeless, in poverty, in the midst of Winter; old age, childhood, mother and maid, widow and orphan, all were thrown into the street. What could they do? There was no work to earn food or shelter. There was no friend that had shelter to give. The earth had been decided to be the property of this corporation, and, in the name of justice, it had remorselessly thrust them forth to starve, or freeze in the Winter's cold. Meanwhile they were prosecuting an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States.

In vain did they cast their pleading eyes to heaven and ask if a "God" were there. In vain did they appeal to the officers of the law

A Strange Flaw

for mercy, for they had no discretion. In vain did they ask each other for shelter, for all were destitute. Like poor, wrecked voyagers cast adrift upon a tempestuous sea, each must find his grave the best he could.

Many, palsied with age or stricken by disease, found relief in death. Others secured employment and homes in adjoining counties. But the larger portion arranged to rent the lands of the Railroad Company until such a time as their cases were decided.

In a damp and miserable dungeon Harry had found shelter. Its horrid walls sweat with a loathsome and bitter air which disgusted the lungs and stupefied the brain. Beyond its darkness the glimmer of day might be seen when the sun was shining. Save these and the scanty meals served, he had no way to mark the fleeting time. As the dismal days wore on, his mind was mainly occupied with the past. His early childhood in the beautiful Spring, as he bounded o'er the green hills in search of early flowers, or hunted for the nests of wild birds in the leafy forests in Summer; the days upon the farm and in the district school; the companions of his boyhood; these all came back. And then he thought

A Strange Flaw

of the day in the store when Jennie and he first knew each other's love; of the happy meetings by the lake before Bragg came to Littletown.

In due time the grand jury met and he was indicted for treason, and the day for him to be arraigned was set. On this day Enoch Foghorn, G. W. Lyer, Oliver Cromwell Jinks, Mrs. Jinks and Jennie, Rev. Goodman, and Harry's mother and others went to Bigburg to see what they could do to secure his release. They were permitted to visit him in the prison and they found him serene and determined. Foghorn at one time looked upon Harry as his only friend, and when they met in that prison, long and sorrowful was their embrace. Though one had felt the frosts of age and stood in life's dreary winter, and the other was on the threshold of manhood's morning, yet both were old in sorrow and felt that strange and holy love which comes to companions in grief. Foghorn was weeping.

"Harry," he said, "I have seen many misfortunes and have borne crushing afflictions with patience. While the world hated me and it seemed as if poverty and want were

A Strange Flaw

staring me in the face, I looked into your fresh young countenance and found hope. I believed that God had created you to follow in my footsteps and take up the battle in behalf of right when I am gone. I said, the boy will show them some day that God reigns and that justice, though long delayed, will come. But now the cruel shafts of injustice are aimed at your life, and my poor heart is well-nigh broken."

"My dear old friend," said Harry, "I have had many fond dreams of greatness, and have looked to you to learn the path of honor. You have always been a true friend to me, and it pains me to see you weep. I have been indicted for treason. I will plead guilty to the charge. I am proud to be distinguished as the enemy of oppression, and I am ready to meet death as the foe of organized cruelty. Foghorn, you are an old man. Nature, ere long, will kindly call you home. I might have stayed for many years to suffer the afflictions which honor must receive from dishonor. I might have brought to death the scoundrel who has wrought our woe, but it matters little. Death will reach him soon enough, for all must die. Some day I might have stood

A Strange Flaw

beside your corpse as you must stand by mine, but I am saved this sorrow. My sails are spreading for a brighter world, beyond the reach of cruel laws, where fraud and vice may never come. Stand firm, old man."

"Oh, Harry," said Foghorn, "plead, 'not guilty,' and I will go before the court and plead in your behalf. If there be justice in the range of man I'll rake the skies, but I will get it. Before the bar I will arraign the shameless fiends who wrought this monstrous wrong. In words of fire I'll tell the horrid crimes committed by their hands. I'll show the touching woes and weeping sorrows made by their works. I'll tell them of your honor and your love, and of the pure and tender sympathy that led you to it, and if a juror has a heart I'll wring it till he weeps with sympathy, and make his every pulse in anger cry for vengeance against this great oppression. Even as I speak I feel the awful promptings of resistless power, that I could tear the very heavens down and set men wild with rage, hearing this horrid tale of woe. Oh, Harry, do plead 'not guilty,' and I will plead your cause."

"Mr. Foghorn," replied Harry, "I am

A Strange Flaw

guilty. I take more pleasure in that guilt than in the little life that you might save. Let them come on, my neck is ready for the rope. My soul aspires to leave the earth. It only mourns to leave you here. But I must for a little time."

Jennie Jinks then pleaded with him with tears in her eyes, saying:

"Oh! Harry! Please forgive me! I know I've wronged you bitterly, and bitterly I've answered for it. The year last past has brought me naught but pain. The days have dragged in sorrow and remorse, the nights been full of painful dreams. Could I call back again those happy days when trusting love filled both our hearts with joy, and hope in rainbow colors made the future bright, all that is left in life to me I'd give for one short hour. Dear love, will you forgive me? 'Twas not my love that wavered. My heart was ever yours."

Harry seemed much affected by her words but he answered:

"Jennie, I do believe you, and if aught could shake me from my purpose, the memory of those happy days and of the love you

A Strange Flaw

bear me might make me strive for that slim chance which Foghorn now holds out."

"Oh, Harry, plead not guilty and let him plead your cause," she begged piteously.

"I can not, for I am guilty," was his answer.

Mrs. Jinks then said:

"Harry, I'm much to blame. I did not know your worth and wished a higher match for Jennie. But now I see my error. You bravely placed your life in peril to save us in our homes. Like my great ancestor at Runnymede, who fought against King John, you made your breast a bulwark against oppression. I'm tired of all this talk of dukes and lords, of wealthy suitors and of railroad kings. You're nobleman enough for me."

Harry's mother was overcome with her grief and for a moment she was unable to speak. Finally she said sobbingly:

"Oh! My poor son! In all the wide domain of human woe there are no pangs that wring a mother's heart more keen than this I feel. The deadly peril threatening you, my son, my brave, my best beloved, my only son, the goal of all my hopes, strikes like a poisoned dagger in my sad heart. My boy, if

A Strange Flaw

any ray of hope is seen in this dark hour, let's follow it and pray for succor to the God of justice."

Harry answered with much feeling:

"Mother, your tears, your hopes, your prayers, are all in vain. We are the victims of the cruelest gang that ever made a government its tool. There is no justice on the earth for us. No false and coward plea shall pass my lips."

When Harry was brought into court to be arraigned, he wore a proud, defiant air, and plead "guilty" with apparent pleasure, and said he was ready for his sentence. The court room was crowded to its utmost capacity. Many had come to see the culprit. Doting fathers had brought their young sons that they might see the guilty prisoner and be kept from iniquity by his sad career. Ministers of the Gospel were also present in large numbers, that they might in their next sermons depict the appearance of guilt, and regale their congregations with moral lessons drawn from the great depravity of this public criminal. Many of them had been to his cell and besought him to forsake his sins before it was too late, telling him that "while the

A Strange Flaw

lamp held out to burn the vilest sinner might return." There were also many ladies in that assemblage, and as he passed in with firm and upright gait, one lady remarked to another so that he could hear it:

"What a pity that one so young and handsome should be so very wicked."

Harry stood before the bench. The judge, who was then presiding, assumed an air of great commiseration, and said:

"Harry Hawkins, you have been indicted by the grand jury for treason, committed against the Government of the United States. To this infamous charge you have plead 'guilty.' The punishment of this offense is death. Have you anything to say, why a sentence should not be pronounced against you?"

Harry stood erect and fixed his eyes upon the countenance of the judge as he spoke in clear and bold tones, as follows:

"I ask no mercy at your hands. You are the agent of rascality and the tool of thieves. There is no fraud which refined villainy can invent or fiends contrive which is not fostered by your power. There is, sir, in the character of fraud an essence which springs from the souls of devils, and whether it skulks by night

A Strange Flaw

in the heart of a thief or marches at the sound of drum and fife in the habiliments of war, or parades itself in ermine, in the name of justice, it is the same foul and despicable essence, fit only for the flames of hell. I arraign this government as a robber; and although you have power over my life, yet in your face I say that I am proud to be counted among its enemies. Treason to robbers is allegiance to God; and before His throne I am prepared to meet the agents of this government and all its servile crew; and there in the clear light of truth, in accordance with eternal justice, let Him judge who is the traitor. I care not for the life that you would take. I am anxious to leave a land where justice has no dwelling place. Standing on the brink of eternity I suffer to see the wreck around me. That a land wrung from the clutch of British tyranny by the hands of bleeding patriots and dedicated by them as the home of justice should so degenerate is sad indeed. But it can not long endure. Fraud furnishes the dagger for its own breast, and though dressed in iron mail and guarded round by a million warrior hosts, it has a rot that gnaws within and makes it perish when defended best.

A Strange Flaw

Bred in the womb of such colossal frauds, calamities innumerable shall be born and vex this land with horrors yet unknown. Honor and justice in despair will leave the earth, and industry no longer sweat for bread, and from the cots of poverty and shops of toil, swarms of avengers shall rush forth, made desperate by long years of wrong. The torch shall turn the temple into smoke; ashes shall scatter where the palace stood, and dynamite shall drink the rich man's blood——"

"Stop! I'll hear no more," exclaimed the judge. "Receive the sentence of the court. Your words prove you a traitor, a most dangerous one. The law must be enforced. On its obedience all our rights depend. The judgments of its courts must be respected until reversed. If the decision was an error the appeal was to the upper court, not to armed force, resisting the court's decrees. As an example for all future time we sentence you to death. You shall be taken from the place where now confined and on high noon, November 1st next, hanged by the neck until you are dead. May God have mercy on your soul. This is our sentence. Is there no other business?"

A Strange Flaw

Being informed by the clerk that there was no other business the court adjourned. Mrs. Hawkins, Jennie, Mr. and Mrs. Jinks, Goodman and Lyer all clustered about Foghorn and begged him to take an appeal to save the life of Harry, but Foghorn said that he had pleaded guilty and that there was no hope of relief from appeal. All were much cast down in grief and many asked if nothing could be done. Harry asked his friends not to take so deep an interest in his cause, to forget his wrongs and let him take his course. After meditating a few moments Foghorn said: "There is only one escape—the president can pardon him." Then, turning to Harry, who was about to be taken back to his dungeon, he said:

"Young friend, this blow has dazed me, but I shall recover soon, and when I do I'll make this nation hear the story of your wrongs. The common people still are kind. Their honest hearts yet throb for justice. Our fathers wisely placed in their clean hands a power to right our wrongs. The president and his associates now stand for re-election and plead like starving beggars for the votes of honest men. From your dark dungeon,

A Strange Flaw

Harry, shall go forth a cry that all the land shall heed. From every hill-top a broken-hearted mother's wail be heard. Thousands of earnest souls shall heed its sound till prairie, forest, vale and mountain-side, yes, every part of our fair land, will echo with your cause. The patient, sluggish voter who so long has slept while villains ruled corruptly, shall wake at last and to the polls, the free-man's peaceful fortress, the many shall swarm forth and push these rascals from their seats. The rule of Duncan will be no more and the trembling president shall offer pardon to stay the common rage."

Harry was then taken to his cell and his friends went sorrowfully back to Littletown, determined to do everything possible to procure a pardon.

A Strange Flaw

CHAPTER XVI

THE END

Henderson Bragg had not fully comprehended the misery that would be caused by the consummation of the scheme he had undertaken. The horrors of the ejectments had been so distressing that it made him sick at heart to hear the officers tell of their experiences, and when he learned that Harry Hawkins was indicted for treason and was to plead guilty he urged Duncan to see the judge and use his influence in favor of a light sentence. But Duncan refused and insisted that Hawkins should receive the death penalty to deter others from imitating him. Duncan relied upon fear and force to accomplish his purposes when fraud failed. He had mortgaged the road-bed to get money to finish the road, and then to make the stock issued to those who had built the road worthless he had foreclosed the mortgage and bid in the property. Thus he and Bragg, through the

A Strange Flaw

agency of the Skunk Creek and Skeighi Railroad Company, had become the owners of the entire property, which they finally completed and put in operation. If the Supreme Court affirmed the Circuit Court he and Bragg would become the owners of all the lands in the several counties through which the road was located. Duncan had no fear that the cases would be reversed, but Bragg became frightened when he heard the speech made in the Supreme Court by Foghorn, and insisted to Duncan that there was great danger that the Supreme Court might decide in favor of the settlers.

At that time there was in existence in the United States a great organization called the Railroad Trust, whose object was to combine and merge into one great system all the railroads and steamship lines in this nation, that thereby it might procure a monopoly of the carrying trade. This trust was controlled by bold buccaneers in finance who did not scruple at any means to attain their ends. They were so interrelated with all the banks, insurance companies and other devices for collecting large sums of money, and had such power with the Secretary of the Treasury that they

A Strange Flaw

could create plenty or famine in the available money supply at will and they held in their hands the leading strings of all the great political parties and furnished the means to conduct the battles that waged between them. They considered themselves secure in their absolute dominion over the material interests of the people of the United States. Duncan was in this combination, and when he found that there was danger of a reversal he began to negotiate with the Trust to get it to purchase the title which he and Bragg possessed in this railroad and the lands. He finally got a proposition which would give them many millions, but he thought it not enough, and was trying to obtain more, when the great presidential campaign for that year came on. Crops had been good and the people generally prosperous, all of which was attributed to the wise administration of the president and his party. Everything pointed to his easy triumph at the polls.

Each party had issued its customary campaign book, containing stock arguments on the tariff and money questions, and everything augured well for the conduct of a lifeless campaign, resulting in the election of a "safe

A Strange Flaw

and sane" ticket. Suddenly a dark cloud appeared on the western horizon, which increased so rapidly in its dimensions as to cause politicians to fear an approaching storm.

Foghorn had been as good as his word. He had returned to the afflicted locality and opened fire upon the administration of the president. The people rushed out to hear him in crowds, caught up his burning words and added to them, and every one became an agitator, and in a few weeks the settlers' cause was taken up by the opposing party and became first a state, and then a national issue. A few of the states considered safe for the president were now in doubt, because of the feeling thus engendered. The president saw this peril to himself and party and felt that he must allay this opposition if he could.

At the close of one of the busiest days on the New York Stock Exchange, during which the market had been unusually feverish, Duncan received a telegram from the president asking him to come to Washington immediately and to bring Bragg with him, stating that the summons was imperative. So, laying

A Strange Flaw

everything else aside, the two men were at the president's mansion the following morning before ten o'clock.

"The president must be panic-stricken," said Duncan to Bragg, while they were waiting. "Why didn't you fix that Foghorn on the start?"

"How?"

"Retain him on our side."

"Impossible."

"Why didn't you buy him? You had my purse to do it."

"Duncan, you can't buy everybody. If all the bags of gold piled high as hillocks in the nation's vaults were offered him to sell his conscience, he'd spurn the bribe and drive the tempter from his presence."

"And he a lawyer," exclaimed Duncan, "and not for sale! Ye gods, I thought this slick profession merely merchandise hawking its talents like wares at auction to the highest bidder. You did not approach him right."

"What do you mean?"

"When you saw his temper you should have tacked and reached him indirectly."

"How?"

A Strange Flaw

"Worked through his wife, his sister or a daughter."

"He is as tough as a gnarled oak that has no rotten spots," said Bragg. "When first he looked at me his penetrating glance pierced to my very marrow. Though well veneered with honest seeming I felt myself exposed and naked to his gaze."

"Bragg, I am surprised. Your conscience is too tender. There's where you fail and publish to the world your real designs."

"Have you no conscience, Duncan?"

"Yes, and a good one, too, that, like a perfect stomach, grinds every grist and causes me no discomfort."

"I own I am not equipped for tasks like this," said Bragg. "I do not relish lying and deceit, fraud and hypocrisy. My conscience and my memory both were taxed beyond the point of comfort."

"I see you're still a fool, the same poor fool that tramped and begged for food and saw his daughter starve to death," was the sarcastic reply of Duncan.

"I wish you wouldn't bring that matter up," retorted Bragg. "Then, no one had suffered at my hands."

A Strange Flaw

"I've made you rich," said Duncan.

"In cash and crime, but not in character," retorted Bragg. "In that respect the poorest beggar that now tramps the streets has more to lose than Bragg."

It was easy to see that Duncan was nettled at this last remark, and was very glad to turn the subject when the door opened and the president entered. He appeared much agitated as he said:

"Gentlemen, I am much disturbed."

"What's the matter now?" asked Duncan.

"You surely know. 'Tis the trouble you have caused by your transactions in the West. Your operations there have raised a storm that now is a tornado, and it is moving East with frightful fury," said the president. "A man called Foghorn looms up in such proportions that his very breath now fills the sky with clouds. He's talking night and day. Thousands rush to hear him, and by his words are made my enemies; even the mighty dailies in the East take note of what he says, and seem to heed it. He must be stopped."

"You'll have to stop his breath," said Bragg; "no bribe will do it."

A Strange Flaw

"Who is this girl that they call Jennie Jinks?" asked the president.

"She is an English maiden, as frail as the tender blossom that a summer breeze may sever from the bough," answered Bragg.

" 'Tis said," continued the president, "that she goes from town to town and crowds swarm out to hear her tell her tale and hearing issue forth and swear grim vengeance on me and my government. There is a place called Litletown, where every man and woman has turned orator and scattered like the sons of Noah, each on a different road, and where they go the prairies are afire, the woods aflame with enmity towards me. That country where your road was built is hatred's hot-bed, and on every side spreads its contagion till even Europe has turned its eyes this way.

"I can do nothing," said Duncan. "I am not in politics. Bragg says Foghorn can't be bought. I do not know this girl or any of these people."

"You must do something," said the president, sternly.

"Must," echoed Duncan. "You must not talk that way. I am John Duncan, the man who made you. I have no master."

A Strange Flaw

"Duncan, you go too far," said the president angrily. "I am a patient man and have learned to curb my temper, but even you must not tempt me to extremes. No man in all this land has asked more favors since I've held this office than have you, and I've refused you nothing. The aid you gave me in my rise has been repaid a hundredfold by what I've done for you. Your grasping greed has raised this storm and, by the gods, you must allay it, or I'll know the reason why! *I still am president.*"

"Don't get excited," said Duncan, "I have not caused this row."

"You went too far. You should have placed a limit to your grasping," said the president.

"I am surprised that you should show such weakness," said Duncan.

"I am a politician," was the president's answer, "and to hold my seat I must, like a barometer, be sensible to pressure. Shall I sleep like a full-fed ass when all the air about me is in a tremble and the earth unsteady under me?"

"The cases which have caused so much complaint are pending on appeal and when

A Strange Flaw

decided will end the strife. Judgment will be given in our favor, and then the people will settle down," said Duncan.

"I don't think so," responded the president. "All men and women, husbands, wives and widows, torn from their homes to swell your fortune, made eloquent by anguish, will run far and wide and with a voice like Gabriel's call heaven's judgment on us."

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Duncan.

"You have a young man there in prison, awaiting execution," continued the president. "This acts as fuel to the raging flames."

"That was a grave mistake," interposed Bragg. "I told you so, Duncan, and begged you to intercede in his behalf."

"When he is executed you'll hear no more of him," said Duncan.

"You may be wise in making money," said the president to Duncan, "but in politics you have less sense, John Duncan, than any man I ever knew, if such is your opinion. This young man is a hero in their eyes and his death will turn his words to holy writ, his grave will be a shrine, the day he died be kept a sacred day, and his martyrdom in song and story will be the theme through all

A Strange Flaw

the coming years, and give our enemies great strength to draw the masses to their cause. Nor will it end when we have passed away. Long after we are dead his death will be remembered, and its memory survive when all our other acts are lost, and load our names with infamy and make our sons ashamed to own their lineage."

"What, then, do you propose?" asked Duncan.

"I've ordered him brought here to-day, and to reach the core of all this trouble, I've also asked his friends to come, including Foghorn. I'll see what I can do to stem this conflagration. If I have proper knowledge of the facts these folks have cause to be aggrieved. Their lands were granted to them by this government; the patent which we give the humblest settler should be as sacred as the charter of your road or else our constitution is a lie," said the president.

"The nation granted lands it did not own," interposed Duncan.

"Then it must make the title good or compensate the people for their loss," retorted the president.

A Strange Flaw

"When did you get so honest, Mr. President?" inquired Duncan.

"I make no claim in that respect," he answered. "I may have winked at many things that should be questioned. In politics we must not be too nice. I've kept a rubber conscience and have allowed such men as you to thrive by over-reaching. But this high act of hateful spoliation reaches its roots too far and strikes too deep to go uncropped."

"The Supreme Court took the case six months ago," said Duncan.

"Why have they not decided it?" demanded the president. "If I have any power to make that court decide, if begging, prayers or tears will stir it, its wheels shall start to-day. Excuse me for a moment." The president then left the room intent upon immediately communicating in some way with the members of the Supreme Court. While he was gone, Duncan said to Bragg:

"The president is in earnest and we had better sell immediately; I will notify the Trust that their offer is accepted and you shall get your share to-day."

"Do it quickly," said Bragg. "I will ask the president to excuse you when he returns."

A Strange Flaw

Duncan then went to the nearest telegraph office and closed the sale. While he was gone Bragg thus soliloquized:

"Since first I started with this scheme I've known no peace. What have my riches been to me? When but a beggar, weary and worn, I have laid down by the wayside hedge and sunk in sweet and dreamless sleep; I've looked up at the azure vault of heaven and felt the promptings of a love Divine. The green sward once my downy bed no longer shows such verdure. The silver moon that looked so clear and bright now seems begrimed with filth. The tints of dawn and sunset now have lost their beauty and all the air about me is filled with flying missiles. There is no peace for him who plots distress. Wealth won through woe of others is but dross, yea worse, it poisons and corrodes the dearest, purest joys of life."

When the president had returned, he said:

"The opinion is prepared. The court will file it in an hour. Where's Duncan?"

"He had an appointment, and begs that you'll excuse him," said Bragg. "This is his busy day. Whichever way it is decided,

A Strange Flaw

suspense will then be broken. The whole case turned upon a dot down in the court below."

"A small foundation for so great a claim," observed the president.

"Tis often thus in law," said Bragg. "So blind is legal justice that the largest matters may hang upon the smallest hair; the slender filament of a spider's web may bind great empires, and a net of gossamer hold captive the great world."

At this point a servant entered the room and announced that a motley crowd had come who looked like gypsies of the road and said that they had come from Littletown and had been sent for.

"Then I will go," said Bragg.

"Stay, you may know them," said the president.

"Alas, too well. If any plea of mine can give weight to their prayers I will gladly add it," said Bragg.

"Show them in," said the president to the servant.

The servant then withdrew and very soon ushered in Enoch Foghorn, George Washington Lyer, Elder Goodman, Oliver Cromwell Jinks and Mrs. Hawkins, Mr. and Mrs. Jinks

A Strange Flaw

and Jennie Jinks. They were the shabbiest looking delegation that ever visited the president by invitation.

The president had paid the expenses of bringing these poor people from the West, not because he loved them or wished to benefit them, but because they had made it necessary to his own interest that he should do so.

"You've sent for us," said Foghorn sternly.

"Are you Enoch Foghorn?" asked the president.

"I am. What do you want?"

"What have I done that you should wage such a bitter war against me?" asked the president.

"Nothing," said Foghorn.

"Why, then, oppose me?"

"Because you have done nothing," was the reply.

"Why should your people's wrongs be charged to me? I'm not responsible," said the president.

"You are," said Foghorn; "and so is every person in all the land, each in proportion to the power he has, and you the most of all."

A Strange Flaw

"But recently I learned the cause of your complaint," said the president.

"Such ignorance is a crime in your position," was the unflinching reply of Foghorn. "The lofty trust in you reposed should make you quick to learn and swift to punish crimes against the people. When robbers, unopposed, employ the government to rob and plunder, and you in stupid ignorance sit idly by and thus let them succeed, you show unfitness for your office. If those who hold the highest seats shall be as deaf and blind as you have been, who will protect the common weal and keep our nation free from scoundrels? But that's not all; since you have learned the facts you have not moved."

"I have," persisted the president. "And that is why I called you here, that I might know what you wish me to do. I would not be unworthy of this chair, that Lincoln once adorned and Washington first sat in."

"There," said Foghorn, pointing to Bragg, "sits our grievance. Hell has not in its darkest depths a blacker fiend."

"Foghorn, you wrong me," reproachfully said Bragg. "I have committed no crime."

A Strange Flaw

"Bragg, you make a common liar seem a saint," interrupted George Washington Lyer.

"Does God still reign?" asked the Rev. Goodman. "Was Ananias killed for lying and can this Bragg still live? He is the quintessence of the spirit of total depravity made manifest in the flesh."

"The meanest skunk on earth," agreed Mrs. Jinks.

"What have I done?" asked Bragg.

"Did you not and your pal seduce the legislature to grant your corporation the lands where we had built our homes and by the grant so stolen through the State, did you not put us out of doors?" demanded Lyer.

"All this was strictly legal. We did no more than any man would do. The courts so far have held with us," said Bragg.

"Is that the only charge you make against him?" asked the president.

"He had us build the road-bed and take our pay in stock, then mortgaged it, foreclosed the mortgage and thus made the stock as worthless as his promises," continued Lyer.

"That is a common practice," said the president. "Most of the roads that web the land were built by that device. Bragg has

A Strange Flaw

only done what rich men often do, puffed up his wares, got all the aid he could, and used the courts to pass upon his claims."

"Custom is no excuse for crime," interposed Foghorn. "Laws may be just, and yet be used to cloak the purposes of theft. 'Tis bad enough to violate a law, to use it as a means to rob is worse."

"The case is in the courts," said Bragg. "What they decide all must concede is right."

"Here are my witnesses," said Foghorn, pointing to those with him. "These are but samples of the destitute, scattered in thousands over the broad domains that he claims for his own. Happy and prosperous before he came, they now are homeless, and all their hopes depend on two small letters and these on a dot so small it scarcely stains the paper of the grant through which this Bragg and his vile partners claim their titles. Now if perchance the court above affirm the lower court, then these poor people lose their all. The fruits a life of toil had garnered are given to these knaves. Can this be justice, because the courts so hold? There is a judgment higher far than human courts which kings and presidents may not despise. 'Tis

A Strange Flaw

resident in the souls of honest men, the mighty masses that compose mankind. The courts' decrees may violate this judgment and be enforced, the wrongs committed go unpunished for a while, but, sir, there comes a time when patience is exhausted, then like the mighty sea lashed into fury by the raging tempest, the people will rise, and all their pent up wrath will then break forth and in the terror of the times their proud oppressors will be but bubbles, swift hurled to their destruction."

"I think," said the president, "that you have great reason to complain, and you shall have redress, if I can get it."

"I have my grievance, too," said Bragg. "A homeless wanderer, shivering with cold, I tramped through all this land and begged for work and food. Their barns were bursting with profusion, yet these people cursed and drove me from their doors, beat me and jailed me, called me a vagabond unfit to live, till I was driven here and in the sight of your most gorgeous feast, torn with pangs of hunger, saw my only daughter starve to death. 'Twas then I met John Duncan, and his welcome words and promised aid made me to vow dire vengeance against the world.

A Strange Flaw

Now I have had it to the full. 'Tis not so sweet as bitter. I sympathize with these afflicted folk, and most of all with that poor boy now waiting death for treason. Do for them all you can and I'll be pleased."

While they were thus talking it was announced that an officer had come with Harry Hawkins. The president ordered him brought in. Harry was indeed a wretched sight, worn thin with grief and worry, pale as a ghost, yet still he stood erect and proudly answered the questions asked him.

At her first glance his mother exclaimed: "My boy! My boy!" and began to weep.

"Mother, be calm and brave," he said.

"'Tis said you've asked for pardon," stated the president.

"The tale is false," said Harry. "I only wish to die."

"Oh God, my son!" exclaimed Mrs. Hawkins. "Do you not love your mother? Oh, how I've wept and prayed for your return. For my sake, Harry, don't be so stubborn."

Jennie Jinks then interposed:

"Harry, since last we met, no time has passed when you were absent from my

A Strange Flaw

thoughts. I've taken the road and told your wrongs to thousands, and people everywhere are urging your release. By night and day my toils and prayers are consecrated to this one great end."

Then turning to the president, she said:

"Most honored president, if there be power in maiden's tears to move your mercy, pity me and free him."

"We ask his pardon, too," said Mr. and Mrs. Jinks.

"God's minister in His holy name craves pardon for this pious son," said the Rev. Goodman.

"Mr. President, pardon him, it will make you lots of votes," said G. W. Lyer.

During all this time Foghorn stood silently by, and finally the president, turning to him, asked:

"Do you join in this plea for pardon, Mr. Foghorn?"

"I do not," said Foghorn. "I cannot say that in the sight of heaven the prisoner has done wrong, and he may well refuse to ask your pardon. All that he did he did with good intent. The government you represent should ask its people's pardon for the crimes

A Strange Flaw

committed in its name, and you, its president, have not been free from fault. You should ask his pardon, not he yours."

"Your words are bold," said the president. "What say you, Hawkins? Do you ask pardon?"

"Never," said Harry. "I stand where I have always stood, firm set against injustice, and while life blood surges in my veins, I will not kunckle to the wrong. The perpetrators of this monstrous crime may rob me of my life, but not my honor."

The president had never before in all his career received such treatment from a prisoner or his friends. At first he felt he could not offer a pardon to one who would not ask it, but the death of this young man would mean his political ruin, so he reluctantly called in his secretary and had a pardon prepared. signed and presented it to Harry Hawkins, who was forthwith released.

It was then ascertained and announced by the secretary that the Supreme Court had filed its opinion and had decided in favor of the settlers.

The joy with which this announcement was received cannot be described. 'Twas like the

A Strange Flaw

dawn of a millennium to these poor people. Even the president involuntarily shouted with the others. They clung to Foghorn and embraced him as a savior and somehow in the ecstasy of joy, Miss Jinks had found her lover, and Bragg was not the man.

When the excitement had somewhat subsided, Bragg asked the secretary if he had learned the ground of the decision.

"Yes," he responded. "The court found the dot was an 'excrementum fliege.'"

"What in hell is that?" asked Lyer.

"A fly speck!" was the answer.

Bragg laughed and said:

"I'm glad you've won. Return and occupy your homes. Ride on the railroad that your hands have built. May all your future lives be full of joy, but this remember: There is no insect, bird, or beast that will not sometimes fight to save itself. Man may be poor and weak, patient, and suffer long and stand oppression meekly, but every creature has its limit. That passed, the weakest then will turn and smite. If, when with plenty you're supplied and some poor, hungry, ragged, homeless tramp comes to your door and begs for food and work, be kind—remember Bragg."

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